THE THREE AGES OF THE INTERIOR LIFE

Prelude of Sternal £ife

The Rev. R. GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE, O.P.

Translated by SISTER M. T1MOTHEA DOYLE, O.P.

Rosary *College*
Rioer Forest, Illinois

VOLUME TWO

TAN BOOKS AND PUBLISHERS, INC.
Rockford, Illinois 61105

Nihil Obstat: Peter O'Brien, O.P., S.T.Lr., Ph.D.
Censor Deputatus

Imprimatur: * Samuel Cardinal Stritch
Archbishop of Chicago
September 29, 1948

Copyright © 1948 by B. Herder Book Co., St. Louis and London. Printed several times by B. Herder Book Co., St. Louis, Missouri.

Library of Congress Catalog Card No.: 82-74245

ISBN: Volume 1 0-89555-248-5
Volume 2 0-89555-249-3
The Set 0-89555-247-7

The typography in these two volumes is the property of TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., and may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, without written permission from the publisher.

Printed and bound in the United States of America.

IAN BOOKS AND PUBLISHERS, INC.
P.O. Box 424
Rockford, Illinois 61105

1989

SANCTAE DEI GENITRICI

IN SIGNUM

GRATITUDINIS ET FILIALIS OBEDIENTIAE

Contents

PART III

THE ILLUMINATIVE WAY OF PROFICIENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

I. The Object of the Third Part and the Language of Spiritual Writers Compared with That of Theologians 3

A. The Language of Spiritual Writers Compared with That of Theologians 6

B. The Question Raised by the Language of the Mystics 6

C. The Theological Bases of the Terminology of Spiritual Writers ..... ç

D. The Principal Terms of the Language of Spiritual Writers ..... io

E. Mystical Hyperbole 13

F. Comparison of the Language of Spiritual Writers and That of Theologians 16

G. Which of These Two Terminologies Is the Loftier? 18

II. The Entrance into the Illuminative Way . 21

A. The Fact of the Second Conversion in the Lives of the Servants of God 23

B. The Necessity of the Second Conversion. 25

III. The Second Conversion According to Several Spiritual Writers 30

A. The Second Conversion in *The Dialogue* of St. Catherine of Siena 30

B. The Second Conversion According to Blessed Henry Suso and Tauler 33

IV. The Passive Purification of the Senses and the Entrance into the Illuminative Way 40

A. The Necessity of this Purification 40

CHAPTUk PAG1

B. How the Passive Purification of the Senses Is Produced ... 43
C. The Cause of This State ... 47
D. Note ... 52

V. Conduct to Be Observed in the Night of the Senses ... 54
A. Four Rules of Direction Relative to This State 54
B. Trials Which Ordinarily Accompany the Night of the Senses ... 59
C. The Effects of the Passive Purification of the Senses ... 61

VI. The Spiritual Age of Proficients: Principal Characteristics ... 65
A. The Knowledge of God in Proficients ... 65
B. The Love of God and of Souls in Proficients . 70

VII. The Spiritual Edifice in Proficients ... 72

VIII. Prudence and the Interior Life ... 77
A. Defects to Be Avoided ... 79
B. Acquired Prudence and Self-control . . .81
C. Infused Prudence ... 84
D. Holy Discretion and the Gift of Counsel . . 86

IX. The Different Forms of Justice and the Education of the Will ... 90
A. Commutative and Distributive Justice in Relation to the Interior Life .92
B. Legal Justice, Equity, and the Formation of Character ... 93
C. Justice and Charity ... 96
D. The Virtues Connected with Justice in Christian Life ... 96

X. Patience and Meekness ... 99
A. Patience and Longanimity, Twin Columns of the Interior Life ... 99
B. Supernatural Meekness and Its Fruits . . 102

XI. The Value of Chastity and Its Spiritual Fruitfulness 108
A. The Motive That Should Inspire Chastity . . 108
B. The Spiritual Fruitfulness of Chastity .111

CHAPTK PAGE
XII. The Humility of Proficients 117
A. Humility toward God 118
B. Humility toward Our Neighbor 122
XIII. The Humility of the Word Made Flesh and What Ours Should Be 127
A. The Humility and Magnanimity of Christ . .127
B. The Union of Humility and Christian Dignity 131
Appendix. The Glory of the Cross 136
XIV. The Spirit of Poverty 140
A. The Value of Voluntary Poverty 141
B. The Fruitfulness of Voluntary Poverty . .145
C. The Merit of the Vows - - - - - - 147
XV. The Grandeur of Obedience . . - - - 149
A. The Type of Servitude from Which Obedience Delivers Us 151
B. The Fruits of Obedience 154
XVI. Simplicity and Uprightness 158
A. Defects Opposed to Simplicity 159
B. Veracity and the Interior Life 160
C. Superior Simplicity, the Image of That of God 162
XVII. The Spirit of Faith and Its Progress 168
A. The Nature of the Spirit of Faith 168
B. The Growth of Infused Faith in Us 171
C. The Excellence and the Power of the Spirit of Faith *7*
D. A Practical Manner of Living by the Spirit of Faith 175
XVIII. Confidence in God; Its Certitude 178
A. Defects to Be Avoided 178
B. The True Nature of ChristianHope . . .179
C. The Certitude of Hope 180
D. The Qualities of ChristianHope 181
E. Admirable Effects of Living Hope Confirmed by Trials 184
XIX. The Love of Conformity to the Divine Will . 187
A. The Signs of Imperfect Love . 187
B. The Nature of Charity and the Marks of Its Progress t88

CONTENTS

CKAFTM . ,A01

C. The Love of God and Our Natural Dispositions 192
D. Progressive Conformity to the Signified Divine Will....193

XX. Fraternal Charity, Radiation of the Love of God 199
A. Why Our Love of God Should Extend to Our Neighbor.... 200
B. Efficacy of the Love of Charity....202
C. The Compass and Order of Charity 203
D. How to Make Progress in Fraternal Charity . 206

XXL Zeal for the Glory of God and the Salvation of Souls 213
A. The Motives of Zeal....214
B. The Qualities of Zeal....218
C. The Sources of Spiritual Progress and Divine Intimacy....222

XXII. Docility to the Holy Ghost 223
A. The Inspirations of the Holy Ghost 224
B. The Ascending Gradation of the Gifts . . .225
C. Conditions Required for Docility to the Holy Ghost..... . . .233
D. Acts Which Prepare the Soul for Docility to the Holy Ghost....234
E. The Harmonizing of Docility to the Holy Ghost with Obedience and Prudence . . 236
F. The Fruits of Docility to the Holy Ghost . .237

XXIII. The Discerning of Spirits 241
A. The Signs of the Spirit of Nature _ _ _ _ 243
B. The Signs of the Spirit of the Devil _ _ _ _ 245
C. The Signs of the Spirit of God....246

XXIV. The Sacrifice of the Mass and Proficients. . . 249
A. Adoration....251
B. Reparation....252
C. Petition 254
D. Thanksgiving....255

XXV. The Communion of Proficients....258
A. The Holy Table and the Unity of the Mystical Body.... 2j9

CHAPTER »*0»

B. Communion and the Growth of the Mystical Body of Christ - - - 260

C. Communion and the Gift of Oneself . . . 263

XXVI. Devotion to Mary in Proficients 265

A. True Devotion to Mary 265

B. The Degrees of This Devotion 266

C. The Fruits of This Devotion 268

XXVII. The Universal Accessibility of the Mysticism of *The Imitation* 272

A. The Mystical Character of *The Imitation* . .273

B. The Dispositions Required or the Asceticism of *The Imitation* 277

XXVIII. Contemplative Prayer 279

A. The Passage from Acquired Prayer to Initial Infused Prayer . . 279

B. The Passage from Meditation to Contemplation According to the Traditional Teaching Expressed by St. Francis de Sales - - - . 279

C. The Principles of This Traditional Teaching According to St. Thomas 281

D. The Acquired Prayer of Recollection and Passive Recollection According to St. Teresa . 284

XXIX. The Errors of the Quietists on Contemplation and Pure Love 289

A. The Quietism of Molinos 289

B. Semi-Quietism 292

C. The Problem of Pure Love 294

D. In What the Practice of Pure Love Consists 297

XXX. The Degrees of Contemplative Prayer in Proficients 299

A. The Progress of Prayer and the Virtues . . 299

B. The Prayer of Quiet 300

C. The Prayer of Simple Union 302

D. Contemplative Prayer and Fervent Communion 304

XXXI. Questions Relative to Infused Contemplation . 307

A. The Principal Problem 307

B. Accepted Definitions 309

C. Intimate Nature of Infused Contemplation . . 312

D. The Progress of Infused Contemplation . .315

CHAPTK PAG

E. What Infused Contemplation Does Not Necessarily Require ... 317
F. The Call to Contemplation ... 319
G. The Direction of Souls in Relation to Contemplation ... 324

XXXII. The New Elements in Infused Prayer ... 327
A. Whether the Character of Newness Always Appears Clearly ... 328
B. The Explanation of This Transition ... 330
C. Reply to a Difficulty ... 333
D. The Special Illumination of the Holy Ghost ... 335
E. The Special Illumination of the Gift of Wisdom Sufficient for Infused Contemplation ... 337

XXXIII. The Agreement and Differences between St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross ... 342
A. The Cause of These Differences ... 342
B. Whether These Differences Have a Common Basis ... 343
C. A Recent Objection ... 346

PART IV

THE UNITIVE WAY OF THE PERFECT

SECTION I

The Entrance into the Unitive Way through the Night of the Spirit ... 353

XXXIV. The Necessity of the Passive Purification of the Spirit, and the Prelude of the Unitive Way ... 356
A. The Defects of the Advanced ... 358
B. The Depths of the Will to Be Purified ... 360

XXXV. Description of the Passive Purification of the Spirit ... 367
A. The Darkness in Which the Soul Has the Impression of Being ... 367
B. The Revelation of the Majesty of God in This Darkness ... 369

XXXVI. The Cause of the Passive Purification of the Spirit ... 375
A. Purifying Infused Light and Spiritual Fire ... 375

CHATTE* .A0*

B. The Influence of the Gift of Understanding in This Purification.....378

XXXVII. The Transluminous Obscurity.....384

A. The Effect of Too Greata Light 384

B. The Effect of Light on Weak Eyes - - - - 386

C. The Fear of Consenting or of Having Consented to Temptations.....387

D. Confirmations.....388

XXXVIII. Conduct to Be Observed during the Purification of the Spirit 392

A. Generous Acceptance.....392

B. Faith in the Mystery of the Cross - - - - 394

C. The Love of Conformity and of Submission to God's Good Pleasure . . 397

XXXIX. The Effects of the Passive Purification of the Spirit in Relation Especially to the Three Theological Virtues.....400

A. Negative Effects.....400

B. The Positive Effects of This Purification . . 403

C. The Purification of Faith.....406

D. The Purification of Hope.....410

E. The Purification of Charity.....414

F. Sufferings That Sometimes Accompany the Passive Purification of the Spirit . . .418

XL. The Spiritual Age of the Perfect, Their Union with God 422

A. Quasi-Experimental and Almost Continual Knowledge of God.....422

B. Loving God with One's Whole Mind . . 425

C. The Indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in the Purified Soul.....426

D. The Signs of the Indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in the Purified Soul.....429

XLI. A Form of Perfect Life: the Way of Spiritual Childhood.....433

A. The Innate Qualities of the Child . . .433

B. The Principal Virtues of the Child of God . 435

C. What Distinguishes Spiritual Childhood from Natural Chilahood.....437

CHAPTER PAGE

SECTION II

The Heroic Degree of the Virtues 440

XLII. The Heroic Degree of the Virtues in General . 441
A. The Distinctive Marks of Heroic Virtue . 442
B. The Connection of the Virtues and Their Heroic Degree 445

XLIII. Heroic and Contemplative Faith 450
A. The Firmness of Its Adherence 451
B. Promptness in Rejecting Error 453
C. The Penetration Which Causes Everything to Be Seen in the Light of Revelation 453
D. The Victory of Heroic Faith over the Spirit of the World 455

XLIV. Heroic Hope and Abandonment 457
A. The Invincible Firmness of Perfect Hope . 457
B. Trusting Abandonment and Unwavering Fidelity 460
C. The Heroic Confidence of the Saints Restores Hope in Their Companions 462

XLV. Heroic Charity 465
A. Heroic Charity toward God, Perfect Conformity to His Will and Love of the Cross 465
B. Heroic Charity toward One's Neighbor: the Ardent Desire for His Salvation and Radiating Goodness toward All 468

XLVI. The Heroic Degree of the Christian Moral Virtues 472
A. Heroic Humility and Meekness 472
B. Heroic Fortitude and Magnanimity. . . . 473
C. Heroic Prudence 475
D. Heroic Justice 477
E. The Heroic Degree of the Religious Virtues 479

XLVII. The Love of Jesus Crucified and of Mary in the Unitive Way 480
A. Christ's Victory and Its Radiation . . . 481
B. Devotion to Mary in the Unitive Way . . . 484

CHAPTUI PAGX

SECTION III

The Forms and Degrees of the Unitive Life . . 488

XLVIII. Perfect Apostolic Life and Contemplation . . 489
A. The Eminent Source of the Apostolate . . . 490
B. The Condition of the Apostolate and Its Fruitfulness 494

XLIX. The Life of Reparation 497
A. The Life of Reparation in the Priest . . . 498
B. The Life of Reparation in All Those Who Have a Heavy Cross to Carry 500
C. A Great Example: the Reparatory Night of the Spirit in St. Paul of the Cross 502

L. The Influence of the Holy Ghost in the Perfect Soul 511
A. The Holy Ghost, Uncreated Gift . . .511
B. The Activity of the Uncreated Gift in Our Souls 513
C. Conclusion 517

LI. Arid Mystical Union and Ecstatic Union According to St. Teresa 519
A. Arid and Painful Mystical Union 519
B. Ecstatic Union; Its Manifestation and Nature . 521
C. What Distinguishes Rapture from Ecstasy . . 524
D. The Effects of Ecstatic Union 525
E. The Purification of Love 526

LIL The Transforming Union, Prelude of the Union of Heaven 527
A. The Graces Which Sometimes Accompany the Transforming Union 528
B. The Essential Nature of the Transforming Union 529
C. The Theological Explanation of This State . 531
D. The Effects of the Transforming Union . 533
E. A Note on the Highest Degreeof the Mystical Life 539
i. The Nameless Depth of the Soul and the Deity 539

CONTENTS

iAPTEK PAGE

i. The Holy Ghost Lifts up the Soul and Prays in It 540
3. Detachment from Self and Attachment to God 541
4. Different Meanings of the Title "Spouse" 542
5. The Desire of the Transforming Union . 544
6. The Intimacy of the Transforming Union 546
7. The Equality of Love 546
8. Conclusion 547

APPENDIX

The Perfection of Love and the Mystical Union 547

I. The Perfection of Love and Infused Contemplation 547

II. The Union Described in *A Spiritual Canticle* Is Mystical 550

III. The Perfection of Love in the Spiritual Espousals 552

IV. The Perfection of Love in the Spiritual Marriage 557

PART V

EXTRAORDINARY GRACES

LIII. Charisms or Graces *Gratis Datae* 575
A. Nature and Division of the Charisms . . . 575
B. Application of This Doctrine by St. John of the Cross 577

LIV. Divine Revelations and Visions 580
A. What Should Be Thought of Private Revelations 580
B. Supernatural Visions 586

LV. Supernatural Words and Divine Touches . . . 589
A. The Different Kinds of Supernatural Words . 589
B. Divine Touches 592

LVL Stigmatization and Suggestion 596
A. The Traditional Teaching 597
B. Ecstasy and Stigmatization 601
C. Levitation 604
D. Luminous Effluvia 605
E. Fragrant Effluvia 605
F. Prolonged Abstinence *606*

CHAPTEK PAGE

LVII. Differences between Extraordinary Divine Facts and Morbid Phenomena 608
A. Differences on thePart of the Subject . . . 609
B. Differences on the Part of thePhenomena . .610
C. Differences in the Effects . - - - 611
D. An Examination of SomeParticular Facts . .613
E. Note 615

LVIII. Diabolical Phenomena 617
A. Obsession 618
B. Possession 620
1. A Striking Example 623
2. Note 626

EPILOGUE

I

The Axis of the Spiritual Life and Its Unity . . 628
A. The Distinction between Ascetical and Mystical Theology as It Has Often Been Proposed Since the Seventeenth Century 630
B. Disadvantages from a Wrong Understanding of the Division between Ascetical and Mystical Theology 633
C. Various Forms of Simplified Prayer 634
D. The Axis of the Spiritual Life and Ascetical Theology Rightly Understood 637
E. The Axis of the Spiritual Life and True Mystical Theology 638

π

The Beatific Vision and Its Normal Prelude . . 644
A. The Absolutely Immediate Vision of the Divine Essence 644
B. The Normal and Immediate Prelude of the Beatific Union 648

ADDENDA

On the Nature of Spiritual Theology - - - - 652

Synthesis of the Treatise on *The Three Ages of the Interior Life* 655

TAGS

Summary of the Work in Three Retreats

A. First Retreat: On Spiritual Progress . . . 656

B. Second Retreat: On the Spiritual Organism 656

C. Third Retreat: On Christian Perfection . . 657

Index 659

Some Terms Used in This Book 669

PART III

The Illuminative Way of Proficients

CHAPTER I

The Object of the Third Part and the Language of Spiritual Writers Compared with That of Theologians

IN Part One of this work, we discussed the principles or the sources of the interior life, the organism of the virtues and the gifts, the nature of Christian perfection, its elevation, and the general obligation of every Christian and the special obligation of priests and religious to tend to perfection.

In Part Two we treated of the purification of the soul in beginners, of sins to be avoided, of the predominant fault, of the active purification of the senses and the spirit, especially of the active purification of the memory, the understanding, the will, and finally of the mental prayer of beginners.

We shall now, logically, proceed to the consideration of the illuminative way of proficients, which is the continuation of the purgative way under another name. It is given a new name, just as one and the same road is called, progressively, different names according to the cities through which it passes: the railway from Turin to Rome is called, first of all, the Turin-Genoa Railroad, then the Genoa-Pisa, and lastly the Pisa-Rome Railroad.

Great variety may be found on the same road; one part crosses the plain, another climbs more or less steep slopes; part of the road can be covered in daylight, part at night, and that in fair or stormy weather. The same is true from the spiritual point of view. Furthermore, on a railroad connecting two cities, speed must not be excessive, or stops eliminated, or the wait at stations too much prolonged. Likewise on God's highway, progress would be compromised by a desire to travel too fast, whereas too great a delay in

one place would put one behind schedule; in this sense, "Not to advance is to retrogress." The illuminative way is, therefore, the continuation of the purgative way, but in the former, progress should be more marked.

To discuss the illuminative way in a methodical manner, we shall treat of it in the following order: (1) the entrance to this way; several writers have called it a second conversion and, more precisely speaking, the passive purification of the senses; (2) the principal characteristics of the spiritual age of proficients; (3) the progress of the Christian moral virtues, especially of humility, a fundamental virtue, and of meekness in its relations with charity; (4) the progress of the theological virtues, of the spirit of faith and confidence in God, of conformity to the signified divine will, of fraternal charity, the great sign of progress in the love of God; (5) the gifts of the Holy Ghost in proficients, their docility to the Holy Ghost, their more continual recollection in the course of the day; (6) the progressive illumination of the soul by the Sacrifice of the Mass and Communion; why each Communion should be substantially more fervent than the preceding one; devotion to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus and to Mary Mediatrix, in this period of the interior life; (7) the contemplative prayer of proficients and its degrees; the error of the quietists on this subject; the passage from acquired prayer to infused prayer. Is infused prayer in the normal way of sanctity, or is it, on the contrary, an extraordinary grace, like visions, revelations, the stigmata? Is infused prayer ordinarily granted to generous, interior souls, who persevere in prayer and docility to the Holy Ghost, and who daily bear the cross with patience and love? (8) the defects of proficients; the pride which mingles in their acts; the discernment of spirits; retarded proficients; the necessity of a passive purification of the spirit which, according to St. John of the Cross, marks the entrance into the unitive way.

Why do we propose to follow this order? Because it is fitting to consider the growth of the virtues and of the gifts before the progress of their acts, in order to show more clearly to what already elevated acts this growth of the virtues and of the gifts, which is a trustworthy sign of progress, is ordained. We are, in fact, already certain through faith and theology that the acquired virtues and the infused virtues, as well as the seven gifts, should always grow in us here on earth, particularly in the illuminative way or that of

proficients. In this stage there should even be an acceleration in this progress, for the soul ought to advance more rapidly toward God as it approaches Him more closely and is more drawn by Him, just as the stone falls more rapidly as it draws near the earth which attracts it.[1] The traveler toward eternity should advance more rapidly as he approaches the end which captivates him more. We have already shown these principles to be certain; there should, consequently, be a very notable increase in the virtues and the gifts in the illuminative way of proficients. Profound consideration of this fact will make us understand better what the elevation of the acts of these virtues and gifts should normally be in this period of the spiritual life.

Moreover, that we may proceed with order, it is fitting that we follow an ascending course, considering first of all the increase of the Christian moral virtues, next that of the theological virtues, then that of the gifts which perfect the virtues, and finally the graces of light, love, and strength which are given us daily by Mass and Communion. If we follow this plan, we shall see more clearly that the prayer of proficients is normally a contemplative prayer. If, on the contrary, we discuss this prayer at the very beginning, we might describe it as it actually is in those who appear to be proficients without perhaps really being so, and not such as it should normally be in this already advanced age of the spiritual life. These are the reasons for the order we shall follow.

Before beginning our study, however, we shall here examine an important preliminary question, that of the essential character of the language of the great spiritual writers who have discussed these matters, language having terms that are somewhat different from those used by theologians. A comparison of these two terminologies or ways of speaking is necessary here.

[1] Cf. St. Thomas, *In Epist. ad Hebr.,* 10:25: "A natural movement (e.g., of a falling stone) increases in proportion as it draws near its goal. The opposite is true of a violent movement (e.g., of a stone hurled into the air). Grace, moreover, inclines by a sort of analogy with what nature does; therefore those who are in the state of grace ought to grow so much the more as they more nearly approach the end." The word "more" is used and not "equally."

The Language of Spiritual Writers Compared with That of Theologians

It has often been remarked that great spiritual writers, especially when they discuss mysticism properly so called, use terms that differ notably from those used by theologians. For a clear grasp of the meaning and import of each set of terms, a comparison of the two is necessary.

The language of the great Catholic mystics has its basis in Scripture, in the Psalms, the Canticle of Canticles, the Gospel of St. John, and the Epistles of St. Paul. It takes shape increasingly with St. Augustine in his commentaries on the Psalms and on St. John; with Dionysius; St. Gregory the Great in his commentary on Job; St. Bernard; Hugh and Richard of St. Victor; St. Bonaventure; the author of *The Imitation;* Tauler; Blessed Henry Suso; St. Teresa; St. John of the Cross; and St. Francis de Sales.

Their terminology, the expression of their mystical experience, gradually passed into doctrinal, spiritual theology, which should compare it with the scholastic terminology of theologians in order to avoid certain errors or confusions into which Master Eckart occasionally fell.

The Question Raised by the Language of the Mystics

At first glance, the vocabulary of great spiritual writers seems to a number of exclusively scholastic theologians too metaphorical and also exaggerated, either in what relates to the abnegation necessary for perfection or in regard to the separation from the sensible and from reasoning or discourse in contemplation. For this reason, certain great mystics, such as Tauler and Ruysbroeck, seemed suspect; and, for the same reason, after the death of St. John of the Cross, some theologians felt they should correct his works and cover them over, as it were, with scholastic whitewash in order the better to explain their meaning and remove all exaggeration. Thus talent sometimes wishes to correct genius, as if the eaglet wished to teach the eagle to fly. It was then necessary to defend the mystics against their enemies and their injudicious friends. With this purpose Louis Blosius wrote a defense of Tauler, and Father Nicholas of Jesus

Mary composed his book, *Elucidatio phrasium mysticorum operum Joannis a Cruce.*[2]

An example of the difference between the language of spiritual writers and that of theologians may be illustrated by the meaning they give to the word "nature." The speculative meaning of this word is abstract and has nothing unfavorable about it; its ascetical meaning is concrete and recalls original sin. We read in *The Imitation* in regard to the different movements of nature and grace: "Nature is crafty and draweth away many, . . . and always proposes self as her end. But grace walketh in simplicity, turneth aside from all appearance of evil, offereth no deceits, and doth all things purely for God, in whom also it resteth as its last end. . . . Nature willingly receiveth honor and respect. But grace faithfully attributeth honor and glory to God." * These words at first seem contrary to the principles often formulated by St. Thomas: "Grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it"; "Nature inclines us to love God, its Author, more than ourselves; otherwise the natural inclination would be perverse, and it would not be perfected, but destroyed, by charity." [4]

Considering the matter with greater attention, we see that no

'Recently Jacques Maritain, in *Les Degrés du savoir* (1932, pp. 647 ff.), dealt exceedingly well with the "practicality" of the vocabulary of St. John of the Cross. According to Maritain, the speculative sciences analyze the real into its ontological (or empiriological) elements; in the practical sciences it is a question of composing the means, the dynamic moments by which action should come into existence. Thus concepts bearing the same name will relate to the real in different fashion. Moreover, he rightly says: "As far as mystical language is concerned, it is necessarily different from that of philosophy: in the former, hyperbole is not an ornament of rhetoric, but a means of expression rigorously required to signify things with exactitude, for, in fact, it is an attempt to render intelligible experience itself—and what experience, the most ineffable of all! Philosophical language seeks especially to tell of reality without touching it; mystical language to make it known as if by touching it though not seeing it. . . . The intellect passes from one conceptual vocabulary to another, just as it passes from Latin to Chinese or Arabic. But it cannot apply the syntax of one to the other."

Thus St. John of the Cross describes contemplation as a non-activity, whereas St. Thomas defines it as the highest possible activity. . . . The latter looks at the matter from the ontological point of view; the former from the point of view of mystical experience, in which the suspension of all activity of a human mode must seem to the soul like a non-activity.

• *The Imitation of Christ,* Bk. Ill, chap. 54.

* Cf. la, q.6o, a. 5; Ila llae, q. 26. a. J.

contradiction exists between the author of *The Imitation* and St. Thomas, but they employ the word *nature* with two different meanings. St. Thomas takes it in the philosophical and abstract sense, which corresponds to the definition of man (a rational animal), to his nature, the radical principle of his operations, such as it comes from God, abstraction being made of every grace superior to it and also of original sin and its results. Human nature thus conceived corresponds to a divine idea. When spiritual writers, like the author of *The Imitation,* contrast nature and grace, they take the word *nature* in its ascetical and concrete meaning. They speak of nature such as it is concretely since the sin of the first man; in other words, turned away from God by original sin, or still wounded although regenerated by baptism. They wish to recall the fact that, even in baptized persons, the wounds, the results of original sin, are not completely healed, but are in the process of healing. These wounds are four in number: weakness, ignorance, malice, and concupiscence. They affect the different faculties,® and often manifest themselves in a gross egoism, at times only slightly conscious, which personal sins can greatly augment. St. Thomas also insists on this point when he speaks of inordinate self-love, from which spring pride, the concupiscence of the flesh, that of the eyes;8 and then when he speaks of the seven capital sins,7 from which come other sins that are still more serious.

Careful thought on the matter shows that here there is not a contradiction in doctrine between speculative theologians and spiritual writers, but a difference of terminology which the context explains. One is more abstract, the other more concrete, for it aims at the application of principles for the conduct of life in conditions in which man actually finds himself since original sin.

For a clearer understanding of this difference, we shall speak of the theological bases of the terminology of spiritual writers, of the principal terms of their language, and we shall compare the expressive value of their language with the value of that of theologians.

• Cf. St. Thomas, la Ilae, q.85, a. 3; q. 109, a.a f.; Illa, q.ôç, a.3.
•Cf. Ia Ilae, q.77, a. 4E
T Ibid., q. 84.

The Theological Bases of the Terminology of Spiritual Writers

Each science or discipline has its special terms, the meaning of which cannot be clearly understood by those who do not know the subject. If mathematics, physics, and physiology have their particular set of terms, why should mysticism not have its terminology? Terms express ideas, as ideas express the nature of things, and the idea which at first was confused subsequently becomes distinct. Scientific concepts are thus more distinct than the notions of common sense, and sometimes new names are needed to express them; otherwise it would be necessary to have recourse to circumlocutions or excessively lengthy paraphrases.

Theology furnishes the basis of the terminology of spiritual writers when it teaches that, to speak of God and our supernatural life, we have two classes of terms, one set of which has a literal meaning, and the other a metaphorical meaning. Thus we say, using the literal meaning: "God is good and wise; He is goodness itself, wisdom itself." These are, in fact, perfections which imply no imperfection, and they are found *analogically* in God and in creatures according to their literal meaning. On the contrary, it is only metaphorically that we speak of the wrath of God; wrath is, in fact, a passion, a movement of the sensible appetite, which cannot, properly speaking, be found in God, who is pure spirit; but the expression "wrath of God" is a metaphor to denominate His justice.

On this subject we must make the following observations: among the analogical terms which denominate God literally, negative terms, like "immaterial" and "immobile," express Him more exactly than positive terms, inasmuch as we know rather what God is not than what He is.[8] We know very well that in Him there is neither matter, movement, progress, nor limit; whereas we cannot know positively the essential mode according to which the divine perfections are in God and are identified in the eminence of the Deity, in which they exist formally and eminently. We know this essential mode of the divine perfections in a negative and relative manner, saying: it is an uncreated, incomprehensible, supreme mode. But in itself it remains hidden, like the Deity, which is manifest only to the blessed who see it immediately.

[8] St. Thomas, Ia, q.a, prologue; Ia, q. i, a. io ad jum.

Consequently, when the mystics speak of God, they use many negative terms, such as "incomprehensible," "ineffable," "incommunicable." They say that negative contemplation, which expresses itself in this manner, is superior to affirmative contemplation. In fact, negative contemplation attains in its way what is most lofty: the eminence of the Deity, or the inner life of God, which cannot be shared by nature, but only by sanctifying grace, which is a participation in the divine nature.

Moreover, among the positive names that are properly applied to God, the least definite and the more absolute and common denominate Him better than the others, says St. Thomas.® Thus the name, "He who is," is more properly applied to God than the others, for by its indetermination it better expresses the infinite ocean of the spiritual substance of God. On the contrary, more definite names, such as "intelligent," "free," fall short of this infinite mode. Therefore the mystics say that superior contemplation, which proceeds from faith illumined by the gifts, is confused, indistinct, ineffable; they place it above distinct contemplation which would come from a special revelation.

Metaphorical terms are necessary, says St. Thomas,10 where there are no suitable terms, especially to express the particular relations of God with interior souls. Thus the mystics speak metaphorically of spiritual espousals and of spiritual marriage in order to designate as it were a transforming union of the soul with God. Likewise by metaphor they speak of the depth of the soul to designate the depth of the intellect and the will, where these faculties spring from the very substance of the soul. These metaphors are explained by the fact that we know spiritual things only in the mirror of sensible things, and that it is often difficult to find fitting terms to express them.

The Principal Terms of the Language of Spiritual Writers

The ordinary terms of Scripture and those of theology would suffice for mysticism; but to avoid excessively long circumlocutions, spiritual writers have had recourse to special terms, or they have

• Cf. Ia, q. ij, a. 11.
*· Cf. Ia, q. I, a.9 ad jum.

given a more particular meaning to expressions already in use. Thus several terms have become essentially mystical, to such an extent that if one took them in their scholastic meaning, they would no longer be true. All spiritual writers speak, for example, of the nothingness of the creature and say: the creature is nothing. A theologian, to render this proposition acceptable to his point of view, would add this precision: the creature by itself is nothing. Master Eckart's error consisted in affirming in the scholastic meaning of the word what is true only in a mystical sense. Consequently several of his propositions were condemned, among them the following: "All creatures are pure nothingness; I do not say that they are little, or something, but that they are pure nothingness." [11] If this were true, God would have created nothing outside of Himself, or rather the being of creatures would not be distinct from that of God.

Likewise the mystics have often called infused contemplation simply "contemplation," when, as a matter of fact, they mean infused contemplation. Thus a special terminology has gradually grown up. Its special character comes from the fact that the secrets of the inner life of God and of the union of the soul with Him are ineffable, or from the fact that the terms of human language have no proportion with the sublimity of divine things. To remedy this lack of proportion, spiritual writers have found three categories of terms which are essentially mystical. They may be classed as hyperbolical, antithetical or contrary, and symbolical terms.

Hyperbolical terms seek to express the infinite elevation of God, as for example, "the superessence or the supergoodness of God," [12] or again the inferiority of the creature in relation to God, as "the nothingness of the creature."

Antithetical terms express something lofty by a sort of contrary effect which they produce on us. Thus the terms "dark night" and "great darkness" express "the inaccessible light in which God dwells," a light that dazzles us and affects us like a superior and transluminous obscurity, which is the direct opposite of the inferior obscurity which comes from matter, error, or evil. Likewise, by irony, the word of God is called foolishness, since it produces this

[11] "Omnes creaturae sunt unum purum nihil, non dico quod sint quid modicum, vel aliquid, sed quod sint unum purum nihil" (Denzinger, no. 526).

[12] Sometimes even in order to say that the Deity is above being, above unity, the true, and the good, mystics have said: God is non-being, or superbeing. The reader will recognize here Dionysius' manner of speaking.

effect on senseless people. With this meaning St. Paul writes: "For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world, by wisdom, knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of our preaching, to save them that believe. . . . For the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." [18]

Symbolical terms are metaphors such as: the Spouse of souls (to designate God), the spiritual marriage, the depth of the soul, the spiritual senses, the sleep of the faculties, the wound of love, liquefaction and spiritual fusion.

It should be pointed out that certain mystics, such as Dionysius, have a preference for hyperbolical terms (for example, superessence, supergoodness); others, like St. John of the Cross, for antithetical terms (the dark night); others, as St. Teresa, for symbolical terms (spiritual espousals and marriage).

In these terms we have the principle that enables us to reconcile the degrees of prayer described by St. Teresa and those described by St. John of the Cross; the difference is to be found more in the terms than in the spiritual states indicated. Thus under the title of the dark night of the senses, St. John of the Cross speaks of the prayer of arid quiet, which precedes consoled quiet of which St. Teresa speaks in the fourth mansion. With regard to the dark night of the spirit St. John discusses graces of which St. Teresa treats in the sixth mansion in connection with the spiritual espousals, which, like the night of the spirit, proximately prepare the soul for the perfect transforming union, also called the spiritual marriage.

The terminology preferred by St. John of the Cross contributes to giving him a more austere tone than that of St. Teresa; but when he speaks of the summit of the interior life in *The Living Flame of Love,* he does so in terms that show a plenitude of most striking spiritual joy.

The meaning of mystical terms is well comprehended, with respect to what is at one and the same time disproportionate and suitable, only by those who have experience in these matters, and they observe a fitting sobriety in this regard. Others have, at times, ridiculously abused these terms, even to speaking of superseraphic superelevation, of "confricatio deifica," of the abyss of cordial exinanition, and so on, and using other terms which remind one of vain sentimentality and sometimes of mystical sensualism.

*. Cf. I Cor. tui, 15.

Mystical Hyperbole

In a study of the hyperbolical terms used by the great mystics, it should be pointed out that they did not use these terms with the meaning given them by agnostics. For example, when the mystics say, as Dionysius does, that God in His Deity or His inner life is above being, unity, the true, the good, intelligence, and love, they do not mean that God is unknowable, but that His Deity or His intimate life contains in an eminent manner the divine perfections according to an ineffable, superior mode, which permits these perfections to be mutually identified without destroying each other.

The mystics mean that the Deity, which can be participated in only supernaturally by sanctifying grace, is superior to the absolute perfections that it contains formally and eminently. These perfections, such as being, life, intelligence, can be shared in naturally and are, in fact, participated in by stones, plants, and the human soul. The Deity thus appears as the inaccessible light superior to every name.

Likewise when the mystics speak hyperbolically of the nothingness of the creature, they mean only that the creature of itself is nothing, and that, although it actually exists through the creative act, it is, in comparison with God, lower and poorer than words can express. All these excessively lengthy circumlocutions are summed up in the more expressive term: the nothingness of the creature.

This legitimate hyperbole is already found in Scripture, as St. Thomas points out in reference to the expression of Isaias: "Therefore is the wrath of God kindled against His people, and He hath stretched out His hand upon them and struck them: and the mountains were troubled." [14] In Scripture, says St. Thomas, hyperbole exceeds not the truth, but the judgment of men, in this sense that God is greater than one can believe, and the punishments that He announces to the wicked transcend what one can imagine. In profane writings, hyperbole is a rhetorical figure which augments excessively the measure of things in order to produce a more vivid impression on the mind of the reader: for example, to indicate a very tall man, the word *giant* is used. Thus human poetry uses hyperbole because of the smallness of human things which it wishes

[14] *In Isaiam, in fine.*

to magnify, whereas the divine poetry of the prophets, of the Psalmist, and that of the great mystics makes use of metaphor and hyperbole because of the infinite elevation of divine things, which it could not otherwise express.[16] Hence there is neither error nor formal exaggeration in scriptural hyperbole, nor in that of the great mystics. The exaggeration is only material, for example, when one speaks of the nothingness of the creature, for thereby the author wishes to convey something that is very true, namely, that in comparison with God, the creature is more poor and deficient than can be expressed; and by contrast God is far more perfect than words can tell.

Hyperbole of the same type is found in these words of Christ: "If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee. . . . If thy right hand scandalize thee, cut it off." [18] It is not a question here of mutilation; Christ uses a vivid expression to point out the gravity of the danger He is speaking of and the urgent necessity of defending oneself against it. Likewise St. Paul, in speaking of the advantages of Judaism, says: "I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ."[17]

Blessed Angela of Foligno is fond of mystical hyperbole and antithesis when she speaks of the great darkness and of the inner life of God, which is above the perfections of intelligence and love, which are identified in it without disappearing. She writes: "I see nothing and I see all; certitude is obtained in the darkness;" [18] that is, I see nothing determinate, but I see all the divine perfections united, fused in an ineffable manner in the eminence of the Deity. What she says in this mystical outburst, Cajetan says in abstract form in the loftiest parts of his commentary on St. Thomas' *Treatise on the Trinity.*[19]

St. John of the Cross likes to use mystical hyperbole also in ex-

16 See Ia IIae, q. 102, a. *i* ad 2um.

18 Matt. 5:29!.

17 Phil. 3:8.

18 Cf. *Livre des visions et des instructions de la B" Angele de Foligno,* chap. 26.

19 Cf. Cajetan on Ia, q.39, a.i, no. 7: "The Deity is superior to all in its being and in all its attributes; it is, therefore, above being and above unity, etc." All this part of the commentary should be read and meditated upon.

plaining his doctrine, for example, in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel:* "All things in heaven and earth are nothing in comparison with God. 'I beheld the earth,' saith He, 'and lo, it was void and a thing of nothing, and the heavens, and there was no light in them' (Jer. 4:23). The earth, 'void and nothing,' signifies that the earth and all it contains are nothing, and the heavens without light, that all the lights of heaven, in comparison with God, are perfect darkness. Thus all created things, with the affections bestowed upon them, are nothing, because they are a hindrance, and the privation of our transformation in God." [20]

To judge by the engraving which serves as a frontispiece to *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* the author seems to demand excessive abnegation. On the narrow path of perfection, he wrote: "Nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing"; but if he demands so much, it is because he wishes to lead souls to great heights by the most direct route. Above, he wrote: "Since I wish nothing through self-love, all is given to me, without my going in search of it." He explains this statement in the following manner in *The Ascent:* "He has greater joy and comfort in creatures if he detaches himself from them; and he can have no joy in them if he considers them as his own. He acquires also in this detachment from creatures a clear comprehension of them, so as to understand perfectly the truths that relate to them, both naturally and supernaturally. For this reason his joy in them is widely different from his who is attached to them, and far nobler. The former rejoices in their truth, the latter in their deceptiveness; the former in their best, and the latter in their worst, conditions; the former in their substantial worth, and the latter in their seeming and accidental nature, through his senses only. For sense cannot grasp or comprehend more than the accidents, but the mind, purified from the clouds and species of the accidents, penetrates to the interior truth of things, for that is its proper object. . . . The negation and purgation of this joy leaves the judgment clear as the sky when the mists are scattered. The former, therefore, has joy in all things, but his joy is not dependent upon them, neither does it arise from their being his own; and the latter, in so far as he regards them as his own, loses in general all joy whatever." [21] This is indeed what St. Paul says: "Having nothing, and possessing

[10] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. I, chap. 4.
[**] *Ibid.,* Bk. Ill, chap. 19.

all things." [22] St. Francis of Assisi enjoyed the landscapes of Umbria incomparably more than the proprietors of those lands, who were busy making them materially fructify to the greatest possible extent.

The mystics themselves, it is evident, explain the hyperbole and antithesis to which they have recourse in order to draw us from our somnolence and to try to make us glimpse the elevation of divine things and the value of the one thing necessary.

A comparison of their language with that of theologians will be profitable that we may see how they clarify each other.

Comparison of the Language of Spiritual Writers and That of Theologians

Each of these two terminologies has its merits. For the theologian's study, his more abstract and precise language, which is limited to essential terms, is preferable. But to lead souls effectively to generous abnegation and union with God, the terminology of the mystics is more appropriate because it is more vivid, more alluring, and also more brief, and, in a concrete manner, more comprehensive. These qualities spring from the fact that it expresses not only abstract concepts, but concepts that have been lived, and an ardent love of God; consequently it avoids many circumlocutions and speculative distinctions which would arrest the impulse of the love of God. It leads the soul to seek God Himself beyond the formulas of faith and through them. It reminds us that, if the truth of our judgments is in our mind, the good toward which the will tends is outside our mind, in God Himself.[23] It leads also to the thought that what is unknowable and ineffable in God is sovereignly good and can be ardently loved without being really kown. It is inspired by the thought which St. Thomas formulates as follows: "(In this life) the love of God is better than the knowledge of God," [24] for by knowledge we in a way draw God to ourselves by imposing on

" Cf. II Cor. 6: io.

28 Cf. la, q.8z, a. 3: "The action of the intellect consists in this—that the idea of the thing understood is in the one who understands; while the act of the will consists in this—that the will is inclined to the thing itself as existing in itself. And therefore the Philosopher says *(Metaph.,* VI) that good and evil, which are objects of the will, arc in things, but truth and error, which are objects of the intellect, are in the mind."

Ibid.

Him, so to speak, the limit of our ideas, whereas love draws us and lifts us toward God.

The distinction between these two terminologies appears, for example, in a comparison of our Savior's words with a theological commentary on them. In verse twenty-five, chapter twelve of St. John's Gospel, Christ says briefly, vividly, and concretely: "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto fife eternal." That is: he who loves his life in an inordinate manner, for example, by refusing to undergo martyrdom rather than to deny his faith, will lose his soul; whereas he who in this world has a holy hatred of his life, for example, by undergoing martyrdom for the Gospel's sake, will save his soul for eternal life.

But if we attempt a theological explanation of these highly vivid words of Christ, we will construe them in the following abstract manner: he who loves his life with a love contrary to charity will lose it. He will not lose it, however, because he loves his life with a natural love, which is distinct from charity without being contrary to it; and with even greater reason, if he loves it with a love which is included in charity itself. It is St. Thomas 25 who thus distinguishes these three very different ways of loving one's life: the first, contrary to charity; the second, distinct from charity; the third, included in charity, when we wish the life of grace and that of heaven in order to glorify God. These distinctions are indispensable to the theologian; they are those of the speculative intellect which analyzes, whereas Christ's words lead immediately to love and to the generosity of love.

Likewise, the mystics speak briefly of the nothingness of the creature in order to express what theologians would state in the five following propositions: (1) the creature of itself is nothing, for it was created *ex nihilo;* (2) compared to God, the already existing creature is nothing, for there is no more perfection after creation, no more being than before, although there are now more beings; (3) by its essential defectibility the creature tends to nothingness and sin; (4) sin is less than nothingness itself, for it is not only the negation, but the privation of a good; it is a disorder and an offense against (iod; (5) the creature is nothing in our affection if we love it without subordinating it to God, for thus it turns us away from Him.

These five propositions, which arc necessary for the abstract study

·· See Ila Hae, q. 19, α.ὸ: "Whether aervile fear remains with charity?"

of truth, are summed up in the vivid expression of spiritual writers: the nothingness of the creature. This hyperbolical expression is not false; it would be so only if the word "nothingness" were taken in its literal meaning. Then it would signify that God created nothing outside of Himself and, consequently, one could not speak at all of creatures. All that we have said is clear, and does not greatly need explanation.

We may exemplify the distinction between the two terminologies by comparing the theological treatise on charity with its multiple questions, articles, objections, answers, and distinctions, with what *The Imitation* says about the marvelous effects of divine love: "Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing stronger, nothing higher, nothing wider, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller or better in heaven or in earth: for love is born of God, and cannot rest but in God, above all created things. The lover flieth, runneth, and rejoiceth; he is free and cannot be restrained. . . . Love watcheth, and sleeping slumbereth not. When weary it is not tired; when straightened is not constrained; when frightened is not disturbed; but like a vivid flame and a burning torch, it mounteth upwards and securely passeth through all. . . . He that loveth must willingly embrace all that is hard and bitter for the sake of his Beloved, and never suffer himself to be turned away from Him by any contrary occurrences whatsoever."[26]

Which of These Two Terminologies Is the Loftier?

Which of these two terminologies is the loftier depends on the principle formulated by Aristotle and often recalled by St. Thomas: "The terms of language are the signs of our ideas, and our ideas are the similitude of realities."[27] The more elevated terminology is, therefore, the one that expresses a loftier thought. Now infused contemplation, in spite of its obscurity and lack of precision, is loftier than theological speculation. Therefore the language of the mystics, which expresses this contemplation, is more elevated than that of theologians. Moreover, that great mystics may acquaint us with their intimate experiences, it is fitting that they should be great

[26] *The Imitation of Christ,* Bk. III, chap. 5.
[27] *Perihermeneias,* Bk. I, chap. 1.

poets, like St. John of the Cross or Ruysbroeck; it is not necessary for the theologian to be a poet.

However, if the language of the mystics is in itself more lofty, because it expresses a higher knowledge, it translates this knowledge less exactly than the language of theologians expresses their thought. But we see that this point of view is secondary, if we remember what St. Thomas, following Aristotle, says in the *Contra gentes:* "Although we know very little about the loftiest things, the little that we do know about them is more loved and desired than the most exact knowledge that can be had of inferior things." [28] Thus a probable or congruous argument on the mystery of the Trinity is, by reason of the dignity of its object, worth more than all the geometric demonstrations of Euclid.[29]

What we have just said is confirmed by the fact that Christ's manner of speaking in Scripture is most lofty; now, the language of spiritual writers more closely resembles it than does scholastic terminology. For example, without feeling that they need to explain them, spiritual writers repeat Christ's words: "If thou didst know the gift of God, . . . thou perhaps wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water . . . springing up into life everlasting." [80] "If any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink. . . . Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." [81] Theologians, on the other hand, would offer the following explanation of these words: sanctifying grace, metaphorically expressed by the living water, is an infused habit, received in the essence of the soul, from which spring in our faculties the infused virtues and the

[28] *Contra gentes,* Bk. I, chap. 5.

[29] In scholastic language one would say: "The terminology of spiritual writers is thus simply higher than scholastic terminology, but *secundum quid* is less perfect; just as the knowledge of a more worthy object is simply higher, although it may be at times *secundum quid* less perfect with respect to the mode of knowing (thus faith with respect to metaphysics); in reality knowledge is specified by its object and not by the mode of knowing, so its dignity simply springs from the dignity of the object." Cf. St. Thomas, IIa IIae, q.4, a. 8 (Infused faith, although obscure, is simply more certain than all natural knowledge, even the most evident). The formal object of infused contemplation is superior to that of theological speculation; there is a difference not only of the mode of knowledge, but of the specifying formal object: the divine presence that is experienced.

[80] John 4:10, 14.

[81] *Ibid.,* 7:37 f.

gifts of the Holy Ghost, all ordered to eternal life. This theological commentary is in relation to the words of our Savior what the polygon inscribed within a circumference is in relation to it. The commentary shows the multiple wealth of the divine utterance, but in its simplicity this saying is superior to the commentary.

Consequently these two terminologies clarify each other, like the doctrine of St. Thomas and that of St. John of the Cross, like acquired wisdom, according to the perfect use of reason enlightened by faith, and infused wisdom or the gift of wisdom.[32]

The terminology of the Gospel, such as it is kept by spiritual writers, preserves the spirit of faith and love of God, that is, the very spirit of the theological doctrine relative to the majesty of God and the inferiority of the creature. From this point of view, an antimystical scholastic theologian would be a bad theologian.

On the other hand, scholastic terminology is necessary, if not for the individual interior life of the faithful, at least for the doctrinal exposition of revealed truth in opposition to the inexact statements that disfigure it. Without the suitability and precision of theological terms, it is easy to fall into these errors; for example, one exaggerates the congruous reasons for the mysteries of faith and proposes them as if they were demonstrative, or indeed one exaggerates the natural desire to see God to such an extent as to make of it, with Baius, an efficacious natural desire, with the result that grace would not be a gratuitous gift, but a favor due to our nature. For this reason the great mystics, like St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, highly esteemed great theologians, whereas false mystics, like Molinos, gave them no importance whatever.

Therefore the priest who directs souls should know these two terminologies and be able to explain the one by the other. No one can know the true meaning of the language of spiritual writers if he is unable to explain it theologically; and, on the other hand, no one can know the sublimity of theology if he is ignorant of its relations to mysticism.

*2 Cf. Ila Ilae, q.45, a. l f.

CHAPTER II

The Entrance into the Illuminative Way

SCRIPTURE often recalls, even to those who are in the state of grace, the necessity of a more profound conversion toward God. Our Lord Himself spoke to His apostles, who had been following Him from the beginning of His ministry, about the necessity of becoming converted. St. Mark relates, in fact, that when Christ made His last journey into Galilee with His apostles, on reaching Capharnaum He asked them: "What did you treat of in the way? But they held their peace," says the Evangelist, "for in the way they had disputed among themselves which of them should be the greatest." [1] And in St. Matthew, where the same occurrence is recounted, we read: "And Jesus, calling unto Him a little child, set him in the midst of them, and said: Amen I say to you, unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." [2] Christ was speaking here to the apostles, who had already taken part in His ministry, who would receive Communion at the Last Supper, three of whom had accompanied Him to Thabor; they were in the state of grace, and yet He spoke to them of the necessity of being converted in order to enter profoundly into the kingdom or the divine intimacy. To this end He particularly recommended to them the humility of the child of God, who is conscious of his indigence, his weakness, his dependence on the heavenly Father.

Christ even spoke especially to Peter about his second conversion, just before the Passion, when once again, as St. Luke tells us: "There was also a strife amongst them [the apostles], which of them should seem to be the greater. And He said to them: . . . But he that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that

[1] Mark 9:31 f.
[2] Matt. t8:a f.

is the leader, as he that serveth." [3] And to Peter He added: "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren." [4] On this occasion, Christ is speaking of Peter's second conversion; the first had taken place when he left his work as a fisherman to follow Jesus.

The liturgy often refers to the second conversion, particularly when it recalls these words of St. Paul: "You have heard Him, and have been taught in Him, as the truth is in Jesus: to put off, according to former conversation, the old man, who is corrupted according to the desire of error, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind: and put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth." [5] This spiritual renewal presupposes a first conversion. The Apostle of the Gentiles speaks of it again in the Epistle to the Colossians: "Lie not one to another: stripping yourselves of the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new, him who is renewed unto knowledge, according to the image of Him that created him. . . . But above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection." [6]

When the liturgy recalls these words during Advent and at the beginning of Lent, it addresses not only souls in the state of mortal sin that are in need of conversion from evil to good, but also many Christians already in the state of grace who are still very imperfect and have to be converted from a relatively mediocre to a fervent Christian life. On Ash Wednesday it recalls to them Joel's words: "Now, therefore, saith the Lord: Be converted to Me with all your heart, in fasting and in weeping and in mourning. And rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God; for He is gracious and merciful, patient and rich in mercy, and ready to repent of the evil."[7] These words are so much the better understood in proportion as the soul that hears them is more advanced and, although in the state of grace for many years, feels the need of a more profound conversion, the necessity of turning the depths of its will more completely toward God. The laborer who has

[3] Luke 22:24, *6.
[4] *Ibid.,* 3l f.
[5] Eph. 4:21-24.
[6] Col. 3:9 f,, 14.
[7] Joel 2:12-1j.

plowed a furrow goes over it a second time to force the plow deeper and turn over the earth which must nourish the wheat.

From this point of view, which is admitted by all, the best spiritual writers have spoken of the necessity of a second conversion to enter truly on the illuminative way of proficients.

Among modem authors, Father Louis Lallemant, S.J. (d. 1680), insists on this point in his beautiful book, *La Doctrine spirituelle.* Before him St. Benedict,§ St. Catherine of Siena, Blessed Henry Suso, and Tauler spoke of it at considerable length; but it is principally St. John of the Cross who has treated of this second conversion, which he calls the passive purification of the senses, and which in his opinion marks the entrance into the illuminative way.

We shall set forth the doctrine of these authors, recalling first of all what Father Lallemant says on this subject, since his teaching is easier to understand because it is nearer to our own times. We shall then better grasp what St. Catherine of Siena and Tauler teach, and finally what St. John of the Cross affirms with originality and profundity.

We shall now see what the author of *La Doctrine spirituelle* says: (1) of the fact of this second conversion in the lives of the saints; (2) of its necessity and fruits.

The Fact of This Second Conversion in the Lives of the Servants of God

Father Lallemant states on this subject: "Two conversions ordinarily occur in the majority of the saints and in religious who become perfect: one, by which they devote themselves to the service of God; the other, by which they give themselves entirely to perfection. We see this fact in the lives of the apostles when Christ called them and when he sent the Holy Ghost upon them;9 in

• In the prologue of his Rule, St. Benedict wrote: "Let us therefore at length arise, since the Scriptures stir us up, saying: 'It is now the hour for us to rise from sleep' (Rom. 13:11). And our eyes being now open to the divine light, let us hear with wonderment the divine voice admonishing us, in that it cries out daily and says: 'Today if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts.' " That is to say: It is time to rise from the sleep of negligence and to walk courageously in the way of God.

* We shall see farther on that, as St. Catherine of Siena says in her *Dialogue* (chaps. 60, 63), the second conversion of the apostles took place more properly at the end of the Passion when Peter wept over his demal, and that

St. Teresa, and in her confessor, Father Alvarez, and in several others.[10] The second conversion does not occur in all religious, because of their negligence. The time of this conversion in our lives [11] is commonly the third year of novitiate. Let us, therefore, take fresh courage now and not spare ourselves in the service of God, because it will never be harder for us than it is at present.[12]*As time goes on, this way will gradually be rendered less rough, and the difficulties will be smoothed away, because the more pure our hearts become, the more abundantly we shall receive graces." [13] At this juncture a decisive step must be taken.[14]

What Father Lallemant says here may be completed by examining the lives of many servants of God. There is a painful period, difficult to traverse, which is often set forth, in the lives of the saints and in the processes of beatification, under the title of "Interior Sufferings"; this period marks the entrance into a higher spiritual life. We believe also that notable light would be thrown on the lives of the saints and also on the causes of beatification, if it were more explicitly noted that this period corresponds to what St. John of the Cross calls the passive night of the senses, and that another period, similar to it in certain respects, occurs later. According to this doctor of the Church, the latter corresponds to the passive night of the spirit.

This observation is of a nature to throw light on the most obscure moments in the lives of the servants of God. If, in reality, between the two particularly difficult periods we have just spoken of, the heroic degree of the virtues can already be established, and if it is even more clearly proved after the second of these two periods, it is a sign that the servant of God has indeed successfully passed through both of these periods. It is likewise a sign that he must

Pentecost was like a third conversion or more properly a transformation of the soul, which marks the entrance into the unitive way.

[10] For example, the second conversion of Blessed Henry Suso, of St. Catherine of Genoa, of Blessed Anthony Neyrot, O.P., and of many others, is well known.

[11] Father Lallemant is speaking to religious of the Society of Jesus, whose formation he was completing.

[12] Nevertheless there will be another difficult period to pass through in order to enter the unitive way of the perfect.

[13] *La Doctrine spirituelle* (ed. Pans, 1908), 2nd principle, chap. *6,* a.2, p. 1:3.

[14] *Ibid.,* p. *66.*

have had a great spirit of faith, of trust in God in order to surmount the difficulties found therein. Thus these two obscure periods—or to use the expression of St. John of the Cross, these two nights—one of which marks the entrance into the illuminative way of proficients, the other into the unitive way of the perfect, far from being an objection against the sanctity of a soul, serve rather to bring it out more clearly. Great merit is, in fact, necessary to traverse them well, so as not to fall back at this time and to come forth truly fortified by these two trials. The lives of the saints are greatly illumined in the light of these principles.

The Necessity of the Second Conversion

Not only is this second conversion a fact which is verified in the lives of the servants of God; its necessity is manifest because of the inordinate self-love that still remains in beginners after months and years of labor. Of the necessity of the second conversion, Father Lallemant says: "The reason why some reach perfection only very late or not at all is because they follow only nature and human sense in practically everything. They pay little or no heed to the Holy Ghost, whose appropriate work is to enlighten, to direct, to warm.

"The majority of religious, even of good and virtuous ones, follow in their private conduct and in their direction of others only reason and good sense, in which a number among them excel. This rule is good, but it does not suffice for Christian perfection.[16]

"Such people ordinarily direct their lives by the common feeling of those with whom they live, and as the latter are imperfect, although their lives are not disorderly, they will never reach the sublime ways of the spirit, because the number of the perfect is very

[15] This mode of acting conforms perfectly to what St. Thomas says of the difference between acquired prudence (a true virtue, already described by Aristotle) and infused prudence, and the gift of counsel (IIa IIae, q.47, a. 14 and q.52). Should a man tend to perfection under the almost exclusive direction of acquired prudence (which is, nevertheless, not that of the flesh), he would never reach true Christian perfection, which belongs to the supernatural order; such perfection requires the frequent exercise of infused prudence and of the gift of counsel. These three sources of actions *(habitus)* are among themselves a little like what agility of the fingers, the acquired art which is in the practical intellect, and musical inspiration are in the musician. Without art, properly so called, and this inspiration, a man will certainly never produce a masterpiece, and will never be able even to comprehend one.

small. They live like the ordinary run of people, and their manner of governing others is imperfect.

"The Holy Ghost waits some time for them to enter into their interior and, seeing there the operations of grace and those of nature, to be disposed to follow His direction; but if they misuse the time and favor which He offers them, He finally abandons them to themselves and leaves them in their interior darkness and ignorance, which they preferred and in which they live thereafter amid great dangers for their salvation." [10]

The same author, who writes for religious, says: "The salvation of a religious is inseparably linked to his perfection, so that if he abandons care for his spiritual advancement, he gradually approaches ruin and loss. If he does not come to this pass, it is because God, wishing to save him, mercifully comes to his assistance before his fall. All the masters of the spiritual life agree on this maxim: He who does not advance, falls back. But it sometimes happens, because retrogression takes place imperceptibly, that a few who have already made some progress allow a considerable period to elapse before they realize that they are falling back." [17]

[10] *La Doctrine spirituelle,* 4th principle, chap. 2, a. 2, p. 187. St. John of the Cross expresses the same opinion in *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. 10, and *The Living Flame,* st. 2, v. 5.

[17] *La Doctrine spirituelle,* chap. 3, a. 1, p. 91. In the preceding chapter (pp. 88-91), Father Lallemant discusses the different dispositions of religious with regard to perfection. He says: "Among religious there are three lands: the first refuse nothing to their senses. Are they cold? They warm themselves. Are they hungry? They eat . . . hardly knowing what it is to be mortified. As for their duties, they discharge them as an obligation, without interior spirit, interior relish, and fruit. . . . This state is dangerous.

"The second avoid the excesses of the first and refuse themselves satisfactions which they judge unnecessary; but they let themselves be deceived under the appearance of good. In their projects they follow their inclination, then they seek virtuous motives to color their choice and justify their conduct. As for their duties, they perform carefully what pertains to the exterior, but with little interior application and recollection, allowing their senses excessive liberty and neglecting the custody of the heart. Souls in this second class are full of imperfections and venial sins. (Father Lallemant does not believe that they are in the illuminative way.)

"The third, as perfect, are stripped of every desire, indifferent to everything, satisfied with everything, and wish only the good pleasure of God. They join together exterior exactitude and interior application; they keep watch over their hearts, preserve their peace of soul, and practice recollection as much as obedience permits. These receive three signal favors from the three Persons of the Most Blessed Trinity: from the Father, they re-

The necessity of a second conversion arises from all that remains in us of often unconscious egoism which mingles in the greater number of our acts. In a number of people this necessity comes from their unwillingness to be considered naïve and their failure to recognize sufficiently the naïveté of a superior simplicity which should grow in them. As a result, they become less simple and true with God, their superiors, and themselves. They lose sight practically of the grandeur of the theological virtues, of the importance of humility; then they no longer understand Christ's words: "Unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Under the pretext of prudence, they begin to consider the little aspects of great things and to see less and less the great aspect of the daily duties of Christian life and the value of fidelity in little things. They forget that the day is composed of hours and the hour of minutes. They neglect a number of their obligations and gradually, in place of the radical simplicity of a gaze that was already lofty, a simplicity which should become that of contemplation, they find themselves in the quasi-learned complexity of a waning knowledge.

On this subject Father Lallemant says: "In religion (itself) there is a little world, the component parts of which are the esteem of human talents, of important employments, offices, and positions, the love and search for glory and applause, for rest and a calm life. These are the things the demon uses as a puppet show to amuse and deceive us. He sets it all in motion before our eyes in such a way that we dwell on it and let ourselves be seduced, preferring vain appearances to true and solid goods."[18]

Human talents are indeed often preferred to the great supernatural virtues. The same author adds: "Only prayer can protect us from this delusion. Prayer it is that teaches us to judge of things in a holy manner, to look at them in the light of truth, which dissipates their false splendor and their spurious charms."

Elsewhere he says: "We commit more than a hundred acts of[11]

ceive what is, as it were, an invincible fortitude in action, suffering, and temptations; from the Son, rays and splendors of truth which glow unceasingly in their souls; from the Holy Ghost, charming fervor, sweetness, and consolation."

See also, in this same book, what the author says regarding this subject on pages 113, 187, 191, 205, 2iy, 473.

[11] *Ibid.,* jth principle, chap. 2, a. 2, pp. 301 ff.

pride in a day without, so to speak, being aware of it." [18] The ruin of souls results from the multiplication of venial sins, which causes the diminution of divine lights or inspirations.[20] Nor is it sufficient to direct our attention toward God as an afterthought, if our act remains entirely natural and our heart is not truly offered to God. A superficial oblation of self does not suffice; there must be a genuine new conversion, a turning of the heart toward God.[21]

The fruits of this second conversion are pointed out by the same author in the course of advice to preachers: "People kill themselves studying to produce fine sermons, and yet they reap scarcely any fruit. What is the reason? It is because preaching is just as much a supernatural function as the salvation of souls to which it is directed, and the instrument must be proportioned to the end. . . . The majority of preachers have sufficient learning, but they have not enough devotion or sanctity.

"The true means of acquiring the science of the saints . . . is to have recourse not so much to books as to interior humility, purity of heart, recollection, and prayer. . . . When a soul has attained to entire purity of heart, God Himself instructs it, at times by the unction of spiritual consolations and tastes, at other times by gentle and affectionate lights, which teach it better how to speak to the hearts of its auditors than study and other human means can. . . . But we cannot get rid of our own sufficiency, nor abandon ourselves to God.

"An interior man will make more impression on hearts by a single word that is animated by the spirit of God than another by an entire discourse costing him much work and in which he exhausted all the power of his reasoning." [22]

Such are the fruits of the second conversion. The author of *The Imitation* often speaks of them, especially when he describes the fervor with which we should amend our lives. He says: "A diligent and zealous person will make greater progress, though he have more passions, than another who is well regulated, but less fervent in the pursuit of virtues. . . . Study, likewise, especially to guard

Ibid., p. 143.

[80] The same author often says that the gifts of the Holy Ghost are, as it were, bound by attachment to venial sin; they are like sails that are furled and not spread.

[81] *Ibid.,* p. 138.

[**] *Ibid.,* pp. 111, 304.

against and to get the better of such things as oftenest displease thee in others. . . . As thine eye observeth others, so again thou art also observed by others. . . . But if thou give thyself to fervor, thou shalt find great peace; and thou shalt feel thy labor light, through the grace of God, and for the love of virtue." [28]

Thus, intimate conversation with God, which is the basis of the interior life, will gradually take the place of conversation with ourselves.[24]

[28] *The Imitation,* Bk. I, chap. 25.
[24] *Ibid.,* Bk. II, chap. 1.

CHAPTER III

The Second Conversion According to Several Spiritual Writers

WE discussed in the preceding chapter the second conversion according to the teaching of Father Louis Lallemant, S.J., one of the best spiritual writers of the seventeenth century. In the fourteenth century, we find the same teaching under another form in the writings of St. Catherine of Siena (d. 1380), Tauler (d. 1361), and Blessed Henry Suso (d. 1366), all of whom belong to the family of St. Dominic.

The Second Conversion in *The Dialogue* of St. Catherine of Siena

St. Catherine of Siena discusses the second conversion in chapters 60 and 63 of her *Dialogue,* in reference to imperfect love of God and neighbor, and cites as an example the second conversion of Peter during the Passion. We read in chapter 60: "Some there are who have become faithful servants, serving Me with fidelity without servile fear of punishment, but rather with love. This very love, however, if they serve Me with a view to their own profit, or the delight and pleasure which they find in Me, is imperfect. Dost thou know what proves the imperfection of this love? The withdrawal of the consolations which they found in Me, and the insufficiency and short duration of their love for their neighbor, which grows weak by degrees, and ofttimes disappears. Toward Me their love grows weak when, on occasion, in order to exercise them in virtue and raise them above their imperfection, I withdraw from their minds My consolation and allow them to fall into battles and perplexities. This I do so that, coming to perfect self-knowledge, they

may know that of themselves they are nothing and have no grace, and, accordingly in time of battle fly to Me as their benefactor, seeking Me alone, with true humility, for which purpose I treat them thus, withdrawing from them consolation indeed, but not grace. At such a time these weak ones of whom I speak relax their energy, impatiently turning backwards, and sometimes abandon, under color of virtue, many of their exercises, saying to themselves: *This labor does not -profit me.* All this they do, because they feel themselves deprived of mental consolation. Such a soul acts imperfectly, for she has not yet unwound the bandage of spiritual self-love, for had she unwound it, she would see that, in truth, everything proceeds from Me, that no leaf of a tree falls to the ground without My providence, and that what I give and promise to My creatures, I give and promise to them for their sanctification, which is the good and the end for which I created them."

In imperfect or mercenary love of God and neighbor, the soul, therefore, almost unconsciously seeks itself. It must "tear out the root of spiritual self-love." As *The Dialogue* states: "It was with this imperfect love that St. Peter loved the sweet and good Jesus, My only-begotten Son, enjoying most pleasantly His sweet conversation, but, when the time of trouble came, he failed, and so disgraceful was his fall, that not only could he not bear any pain himself, but his terror of the very approach of pain caused him to fall, and deny the Lord, with the words, 'I have never known Him.' "

In chapter 63 of *The Dialogue,* the saint says, in speaking of the passage from mercenary to filial love: "Every perfection and every virtue proceeds from charity, and charity is nourished by humility, which results from the knowledge and holy hatred of self, that is, sensuality. . . . To arrive thereat - - - a man must exercise himself in the extirpation of his perverse self-will, both spiritual and temporal, hiding himself in his own house, as did Peter, who, after the sin of denying My Son, began to weep. Yet his lamentations were imperfect, and remained so until after the forty days, that is, until after the Ascension. But when My Truth returned to Me in His humanity, Peter and the others concealed themselves in the house, awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit, which My Truth had promised them. They remained barred in from fear, because the soul always fears until she arrives at true love. But when they had

persevered in fasting and in humble and continual prayer, until they had received the abundance of the Holy Spirit, they lost their fear, and followed and preached Christ crucified."

St. Catherine of Siena shows in this passage that the imperfect soul which loves the Lord with a love that is still mercenary, ought to follow Peter's example after his denial of Christ. Not infrequently at this time Providence permits us also to fall into some visible fault to humiliate us and oblige us to enter into ourselves, as Peter did, when immediately after his fall, seeing that Jesus looked at him, he "wept bitterly." [1]

In connection with Peter's second conversion, we should recall that St. Thomas teaches [2] that even after a serious sin, if a man has a truly fervent contrition proportionate to the degree of. grace lost, he recovers this degree of grace; he may even receive a higher degree if he has a still more fervent contrition. He is, therefore, not obliged to recommence his ascent from the very beginning, but continues it, taking it up again at the point he had reached when he fell. A mountain climber who stumbles halfway up, rises immediately, and continues the ascent. The same is true in the spiritual order. Everything leads us to think that by the fervor of his repentance Peter not only recovered the degree of grace that he had lost, but was raised to a higher degree of the supernatural life. The Lord permitted this fall only to cure him of his presumption so that he might become more humble and thereafter place his confidence, not in himself, but in God. Thus, the humiliated Peter on his knees weeping over his sin is greater than the Peter on Thabor, who did not as yet sufficiently know his frailty.

The second conversion may also take place, though we have no grave sin to expiate, for example, at a time when we are suffering from an injustice, or a calumny, which, under divine grace, awakens in us not sentiments of vengeance, but hunger and thirst for the justice of God. In such a case, the generous forgiving of a grave injury sometimes draws down on the soul of the one who pardons, a great grace, which makes him enter a higher region of the spiritual life. The soul then receives a new insight into divine things and an impulse which it did not know before. David received such

[1] Luke 22:62.
[2] Cf. IIIa, q. 89, a. 2.

a grace when he pardoned Semei who had outraged and cursed him, while throwing stones at him.®

A more profound insight into the life of the soul may originate also on the occasion of the death of a dear one, or of a disaster, or of a great rebuff, when anything occurs which is of a nature to reveal the vanity of earthly things and by contrast the importance of the one thing necessary, union with God, the prelude of the life of heaven.

In her *Dialogue* St. Catherine also speaks often of the necessity of leaving the imperfect state in which a person serves God more or less through interest and for his own satisfaction, and in which he wishes to *go* to God the Father without passing through Jesus crucified.4 To leave this imperfect state, the soul which still seeks itself must be converted that it may cease to seek itself and may truly go in search of God by the way of abnegation, which is that of profound peace.

The Second Conversion According to Blessed Henry Suso and Tauler

The works of Blessed Henry Suso contain a number of instructions relative to the second conversion. He himself experienced this conversion after a few years of religious life, during which he had slipped into some negligences. Particular attention ought to be given to what he says about the necessity of a more interior and deep Christian life in religious who give themselves almost exclusively to study, and in others who are chiefly attentive to exterior observances and austerities. In the divine light he saw "these two classes of persons circling about the Savior's cross, without being able to reach Him," 5 because both groups sought themselves, cither in study or in exterior observances, and because they judged each other without charity. He understood then that he should remain in complete self-abnegation, ready to accept all that God

•Cf. II Kings 16:5-11.

4 Cf. *Dialogue,* chaps. 75, 144, 149.

• *Le Livre de la sagesse éternelle,* Part III, chap. 5, from the *Œuvres mystiques du Bx Henri Suso* (French translation by Father Thiriot), 1899, II, ij3 ff. Cf. *ibid.,* pp. 224, 269, 274, 280, 284.

might will, and to accept it with love, at the same time practicing great fraternal charity.

Tauler, who, as Bossuet says, is "one of the most solid and most correct of the mystics," [7] speaks of the second conversion especially in two of his sermons, that for the second Sunday of Lent, and the one for the Monday before Palm Sunday.[8]

In the sermon for the second Sunday of Lent, Tauler points out those who need the second conversion; they are those who still more or less resemble the scribes and Pharisees. We may summarize his teaching as follows:

The scribes, he says, were wise men who made much of their learning, whereas the Pharisees, who were strongly attached to their practices and observances, highly esteemed their own piety.[9] We recognize in these two classes the two most harmful evil inclinations that can be found among pious people. . . . Nothing good comes from either of these dispositions. Nevertheless, rare are they who are not somewhat retained in one or the other of these evil inclinations or even in both of them at the same time; but some are much more held than others.

By the scribes we must understand intellectual men who value everything according to the standard of their reason or sensibility. They pass on to their reason what their senses have furnished them, and thus they come to understand great things. They glory in this knowledge and speak eloquently, but the depths of their souls, whence the truth should come, remain empty and desolate.

The Pharisees, on the other hand, are pious people who have a good opinion of themselves, think they amount to something, hold firmly to their observances and their practices, believe there is nothing beyond these, and aspire to esteem and consideration because of these practices. They condemn those who do not see things as they do (even if their lives are in no way seriously reprehensible).

(Tauler certainly does not believe that these last are in the illuminative way.)

Let everyone, he adds, guard against these Pharisaical ways in the depths of his soul, and be watchful that no false sanctity hide there.

[6] *Ibid.,* p. 235.

[7] *Instruction sur les états d'oraison,* Traité I, livre I, nos. 2-3.

[8] *Sermons de Tauler* (trad. Hugucny et Théry), 1, 236-46, 257-69.

[9] The two classes of persons of whom Blessed Henry Suso spoke, as we have seen, resemble these two groups.

In this connection we should recall what the Gospel tells us about the prayer of the Pharisee and the publican, a parable which shows the necessity of a more profound conversion.

What occurs at the beginning of the second conversion? God begins to pursue the soul, and it likewise seeks God, not, however, without a struggle against the inclinations of the exterior man and without anxiety. This state is manifested by a keen desire for God and for perfection, and also by what St. Paul calls the struggle of the spirit against the flesh or the inferior part of man.[10] From this struggle originates anxiety or even a certain anguish; the soul asks itself if it will reach the end so keenly desired.

Tauler gives a good description of this state, which St. John of the Cross later on calls the passive purification of the senses, in which there is a beginning of infused contemplation. In the sermon for the second Sunday of Lent, the old Dominican master declares: "From this pursuit of God (and of the soul who seek each other) keen anguish results. When a man is plunged into this anxiety and becomes aware of this pursuit of God in his soul, it is then without doubt that Jesus comes and enters into him. But when one does not feel this pursuit or experience this anguish, Jesus does not come.

"Of all those who do not let themselves be caught by this pursuit and this anguish, none ever turns out well; they remain what they are, they do not enter into themselves, and consequently they know nothing of what is taking place in them."

These last words show that in Tauler's opinion this passive purification is indeed in the normal way of sanctity and not an essentially extraordinary grace like revelations, visions, and the stigmata. It is a purification that must be undergone on earth while meriting, or in purgatory without meriting, in order to reach perfect purity of soul, without which one cannot enter heaven. If a man must labor to obtain a doctor's degree in theology or law, he must also toil to reach true perfection.

Though some people stricken with neurasthenia erroneously believe they are in this state, it often happens that interior souls who arc truly in this anxiety and who seek light from a confessor, obtain only this answer: "Do not trouble yourself; those are only scruples. Remain in peace; the passive purifications that certain books speak of arc very rare and extraordinary." After this answer, the

[10] Gal. 5:17: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit."

soul is no more illuminated than before and has the impression of not having been understood.

What Tauler speaks of in the above passage is truly in the normal way of sanctity or of the full perfection of Christian life. God appears here as the Hunter in pursuit of souls for their greatest good.

What should the soul do that is thus pursued by the Savior? Tauler answers: "In truth, it should do what the woman of Canaan did: go to Jesus and cry in a loud voice, that is, with an ardent desire: 'Lord, Son of David, have pity on me!'

"Ah! my children, this divine pursuit, this hunt provokes (in some souls) an appealing cry of immense force; the supplication of the spirit carries thousands of leagues and more (that is, even to the Most High); it is a sigh which comes from a measureless depth. This desire of the soul reaches far beyond nature; it is the Holy Ghost Himself who must utter this sigh in us, as St. Paul says: 'The Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings.' " [11]

These words of Tauler show that in his opinion and, as we shall see, later on in that of St. John of the Cross, the soul in this struggle enters on the mystical life through a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost and a beginning of contemplation, in spite of the aridity in which it remains. The Holy Ghost, who dwells in all the just, begins to render His influence manifest.

Tauler points out here that, after this cry of the soul, God treats it at times as Jesus did the woman of Canaan; He acts as if He did not hear or were not willing to grant its prayer. This is the time to insist, as the woman of Canaan did so admirably, under the divine inspiration which pursued her in the midst of obvious rebuffs.

"Ah! my children," says Tauler, "how greatly then should the desire in the depths of the soul become more keen and more urgent. . . . Even if God refused to give bread, even if He disowned one as His child . . . , one should answer Him as did the Canaanite: 'Yea Lord; for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters.'

"Ah! my children," adds Tauler, "if one could succeed in thus penetrating the depths of the truth (of our consciences) not by learned commentaries, words, or indeed with the senses, but into the true depth! Then neither God nor any creature could tread on you, crush you, bury you so deeply that you would not plunge

[11] Rom. *8:16.*

yourselves truly much deeper still. Though you should be subjected to affronts, scorn, and rebuffs, you would remain firm in perseverance, you would plunge still deeper, animated by a complete confidence, and you would ever increase your zeal.[12] Ah! yes, my children, everything depends on this; a man who reached this point, would be really successful. These roads, and these alone, lead, in truth, without any intermediary station to God. But to some it seems impossible to reach this degree of limitless annihilation and to remain thus in this depth with perseverance, with entire and veritable assurance, as this poor Canaanite woman did. Consequently Christ answered her: 'O woman! great is thy faith. Be it done to thee as thou wilt.' In truth, this is the answer that will be made to all those who will be found in such dispositions and on this road."

Tauler relates at this point what happened to a young girl who, believing herself far from God, nevertheless abandoned herself entirely to His holy will, no matter what it might bring, and gave herself up wholly for eternity; then, he says, "she was carried very far above every intermediary and completely drawn into the divine abyss."

To show the fruits of the second conversion, the old master adds: "Take the last place, as the Gospel teaches, and you shall be lifted up. But those who exalt themselves will be humbled. Desire only what God has willed from all eternity; accept the place which in His most amiable will He has decided should be yours.[18]

"My children, it is by a person's complete renunciation of self and of all that he possesses that he goes to God. One drop of this renunciation, one rill of it,[14] would better prepare a man and lead him nearer to God than if he had stripped himself of all his garments and given them away, than if he had eaten thorns and stones, supposing that nature could bear it. A short moment lived in these dispositions would be more useful for us than forty years following practices of our own choice. . . .

[12] David acted thus under the insults of Semei (II Kings 16:5-11); thus the saints conducted themselves, as we see in the lives of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic, St. Benedict Joseph Labre, and many others.

[12] The Lord may wish that we should be in our milieu like a little root hidden in the earth, and not like a flower visible to all. The role of the little root which draws secretions from the earth for the sap of the tree, is highly useful; happy they who fulfill it well.

[''] These words indicate that this is the fruit of a great grace, a true conversion.

"For long years you go your own little way and you do not advance, . . . a deplorable condition. Let us, therefore, pray our Lord that we may plunge ourselves so profoundly in God that we may be found in Him. Amen." [15]

Such is Tauler's description of the second conversion in which the soul is far more profoundly "turned toward God," like the soil, for example, which, on second plowing, is more deeply turned up that it may become really fruitful.

Tauler treats the same subject in the sermon for the Monday before Palm Sunday[18] while explaining the text: "If any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink. . . . Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." [17] In this sermon he describes[18] the soul's thirst for God which arises under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, at the same time as a sort of disgust for everything created, for everything in it that is inordinate, untrue, and vain. This lively desire for God and this distaste for creatures are accompanied by a struggle against the inordinate inclinations of the sensibility and impatience. This is in reality the state that St. John of the Cross later calls the passive purification of the senses. Tauler describes it with an abundance of metaphors that today seem excessive. He notes that after this trial there is a period of repose and enjoyment.[19] Then he describes the second series of trials by which the unitive way of the perfect begins; [20] these trials are those which St. John of the Cross calls the passive night of the spirit.

This teaching, which is approximately the same under varied forms in the works of St. Catherine of Siena, Blessed Henry Suso, and Venerable Tauler, shows that to enter the illuminative way of proficients a person needs what Father Lallemant and several others have rightly called a second conversion. Then the soul begins to understand Christ's words to the apostles, who were arguing to find out who was the first among them: "Amen I say to you, unless you

[15] We remark with Xaverius Hornstein *(Les grands mystiques allemands du XIVe siècle,* 1922, p. 288) that "Master Eckart grasped mysticism from the aspect of the intellect, Blessed Henry Suso from the aspect of the heart, John Tauler from that of the will," from the depth of the will, whence his holy austerity, the requisite for very close union with God.

[16] Cf. *Œuvres* (Hugueny, Théry), I, 257-69.

[17] John 7:37 f.

[18] *Œuvres,* 1,257-69, nos. 2-4.

[19] *Ibid.,* nos. 5 f.

[20] *Ibid.,* nos. 7 f.

be converted and become as little children [by simplicity and consciousness of your weakness], you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." [21] The apostles were already in the state of grace, but they needed a second conversion to enter the intimacy of the kingdom, to penetrate deeply into it, that "the depths of the soul," which Tauler speaks of so frequently, might no longer contain any egoism or self-love, but belong wholly to God so that God might truly reign in it. Until His reign is established in the generous soul, the Lord pursues it; and, under the divine inspiration, it will also seek Him by an increasingly pure and strong desire, at the same time that it ceases to seek itself. Then its eyes will be opened and it will see that a number of those whom it judged severely are better than it. This work is the divine work par excellence, that of the profound purification of the soul; first of the sensitive part; then of the spiritual part to the end that it may be established in the intimacy of the divine union, the normal prelude of the life of heaven.

[21] Matt. 18:3.

CHAPTER IV

The Passive Purification of the Senses and the Entrance into the Illuminative Way

THE entrance into the illuminative way, which is the second conversion described by St. Catherine of Siena, Blessed Henry Suso, Tauler, and Father Lallemant, is called by St. John of the Cross the passive purification of the senses or the night of the senses. At this point in our study we must see what St. John of the Cross says about: (i) the necessity of this purification; (2) the way it is produced; (3) the conduct to be observed at this difficult time; (4) the trials which ordinarily accompany the purifying divine action. These points will be the subject of this chapter and the following one.

The Necessity of This Purification

In *The Dark Night of the Soul,* St. John of the Cross says: "The night of sense is common, and the lot of many: these are the beginners"; [1] and he adds farther on, after discussing this trial: "The soul began to set out on the way of the spirit, the way of proficients, which is also called the illuminative way, or the way of infused contemplation, wherein God Himself teaches and refreshes the soul without meditation or any active efforts that itself may deliberately make."[2] Nevertheless the soul must always struggle to remove the obstacles to this grace and to be faithful to it. These two texts are extremely important, for they mark the age of the spiritual life

[1] *The Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk. I, chap. 8.
[2] *Ibid.,* chap. 14.

in which the purifying trial we are considering is ordinarily produced.

The necessity of this purification, as the saint shows in the same book,§ arises from the defects of beginners, which may be reduced to three: spiritual pride, spiritual sensuality, and spiritual sloth. St. John of the Cross teaches that remains of the seven capital sins, like so many deviations of the spiritual fife, are found even here. And yet the mystical doctor considers only the disorder that results from them in our relations with God; he does not speak of all that taints our dealings with our neighbor and the apostolate which may be under our care.

Spiritual sensuality, with which we are especially concerned here under the name of spiritual gluttony, consists in being immoderately attached to the sensible consolations that God sometimes grants in prayer. The soul seeks these consolations for themselves, forgetting that they are not an end, but a means; it prefers the savor of spiritual things to their purity, and thus seeks itself in the things of God rather than God Himself, as it should. In others, this self-seeking is in the exterior apostolate, in some form or other of activity.

Spiritual sloth comes as a rule then from the fact that, when spiritual gluttony or some other form of selfishness is not satisfied to the desired extent, one falls into impatience and a certain disgust for the work of sanctification as soon as it is a question of advancing by the "narrow way." The early writers spoke much of this spiritual sloth and of this disgust, which they called acedia.4 They even declared that acedia, when accentuated, leads to malice, rancor, pusillanimity, discouragement, sluggishness, and dissipation of spirit in regard to forbidden things.®

Spiritual pride manifests itself quite frequently when spiritual gluttony or some other self-seeking is satisfied, when things go as one wishes; then a man boasts of his perfection, judges others severely, sets himself up as a master, while he is still only a poor disciple. This spiritual pride, says St. John of the Cross,® leads beginners to flee masters who do not approve of their spirit; "they even end by bearing them rancor." They seek a guide favorable to their

§ *Ibid.,* chaps. 2-9.
* Cf. St. Thomas, Ila Ilac, q. *35.*
• *Ibid.,* a.4; q. 36, a.4.
• *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. 2.

inclinations, desire to be on intimate terms with him, confess their sins to him in such a way as not to lower themselves in his esteem. As St. John of the Cross says: "They go about palliating their sins, that they may not seem so bad: which is excusing rather than accusing themselves. Sometimes they go to a stranger to confess their sin, that their usual confessor may think that they are not sinners, but good people. And so they always take pleasure in telling him of their goodness." [7]

This spiritual pride leads, as is evident, to a certain pharisaical hypocrisy, which shows that the beginners, whom St. John of the Cross is speaking of, are still very imperfect; they are, therefore, beginners in the sense in which this word is generally understood by spiritual authors.[8] And yet it is of them that St. John of the Cross says here that they need to undergo the passive purification of the senses, which therefore marks clearly the entrance into the illuminative way of proficients, according to the traditional meaning of these terms.

To the defects of spiritual gluttony, spiritual sloth, and spiritual pride, are added many others: curiosity, which decreases love of the truth; sufficiency, which leads us to exaggerate our personal worth, to become irritated when it is not recognized; jealousy and envy, which lead to disparagement, intrigues, and unhappy conflicts, which more or less seriously injure the general good. Likewise in the apostolate, the defect rather frequent at this time is natural eagerness in self-seeking, in making oneself a center, in drawing souls to oneself or to the group to which one belongs instead of leading

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] We cannot admit, as some have held, that the beginners in question here have already reached the ordinary unitive way by active purification, and that they merit the name of beginners only from a special point of view, since they are setting out, not on the interior way but on the passive ways, considered as more or less extraordinary, outside the normal way. The defects of which St. John of the Cross has just spoken show that real beginners are meant here. He does not employ a special vocabulary; his is the traditional terminology, taken in its full and undiminished meaning.

In these chapters of *The Dark Night* (Bk. I, chaps, 9 f.), where he deals with the passive night of the senses, St. John of the Cross always says "the beginners who are thus tried." We see thereby how greatly deceived they are who wish to place this passive purification or the senses not at the entrance to the illuminative way, as St. John of the Cross himself says it is *(ibid.,* chap. 14), but in the middle of the unitive way and after one has been following this way for a notable period of time.

them to our Lord. Finally, let trial, a rebuff, a disgrace come, and one is, in consequence, inclined to discouragement, discontent, sulkiness, pusillanimity, which seeks more or less to assume the external appearances of humility. All these defects show the necessity of a profound purification.

Several of these defects may, without doubt, be corrected by exterior mortification and especially by interior mortification which we should impose on ourselves; but such mortification does not suffice to extirpate their roots, which penetrate to the very center of our faculties.9 "The soul, however," says St. John of the Cross, "cannot be perfectly purified from these imperfections, any more than from the others, until God shall have led it into the passive purgation of the dark night, which I shall speak of immediately. But it is expedient that the soul, so far as it can, should labor, on its own part, to purify and perfect itself, that it may merit from God to be taken under His divine care, and be healed from those imperfections which of itself it cannot remedy. For, after all the efforts of the soul, it cannot by any exertions of its own actively purify itself so as to be in the slightest degree fit for the divine union of perfection in the love of God, if God Himself does not take it into His own hands and purify it in the fire, dark to the soul." 10

In other words, the cross sent by God to purify us must complete the work of mortification which we impose on ourselves. Consequently, as St. Luke relates: "He [Jesus] said to all: If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself [this is the law of mortification or abnegation], and take up his cross daily, and follow Me";11 *per crucem ad lucem.* This road leads to the light of life, to intimate union with God, the normal prelude of the life of heaven.

How the Passive Purification of the Senses is Produced

This state is manifested by three signs which St. John of the Cross describes as follows:

I hc first is this: when we find no comfort in the things of God, and none also in created things. For when God brings the soul into the dark

• They are what St. Thomas calls *reliquiae peccati,* which extreme unction should cause to disappear before death. Cf. *Supplement,* q.30, a. 1.

10 *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. 3.

11 Luke 9:13.

night in order to wean it from sweetness and to purge the desire of sense, He does not allow it to find sweetness or comfort anywhere. It is then probable, in such a case, that this dryness is not the result of sins or of imperfections recently committed; for if it were, we should feel some inclination or desire for other things than those of God. . . . But still, inasmuch as this absence of pleasure in the things of heaven and of earth may proceed from bodily indisposition or a melancholy temperament, which frequently causes dissatisfaction with all things, the second test and condition become necessary.

The second test and condition of this purgation are that the memory dwells ordinarily upon God with a painful anxiety and carefulness, the soul thinks it is not serving God, but going backwards, because it is no longer conscious of any sweetness in the things of God. . . . The true purgative aridity is accompanied in general by a painful anxiety, because the soul thinks that it is not serving God. Though this be occasionally increased by melancholy or other infirmity—so it sometimes happens—yet it is not for that reason without its purgative effects on the desires, because the soul is deprived of all sweetness, and its sole anxieties are referred to God. For when mere bodily indisposition is the cause, all that it does is to produce disgust and the ruin of bodily health, without the desire of serving God which belongs to the purgative aridity. In this aridity, though the sensual part of man be greatly depressed, weak and sluggish in good works, by reason of the little satisfaction they furnish, the spirit is, nevertheless, ready and strong.

The cause of this dryness is that God is transferring to the spirit the goods and energies of the senses, which, having no natural fitness for them, become dry, parched up, and empty; for the sensual nature of man is helpless in those things which belong to the spirit simply. Thus the spirit having been tasted, the flesh becomes weak and remiss; but the spirit, having received its proper nourishment, becomes strong, more vigilant and careful than before, lest there should be any negligence in serving God. At first it is not conscious of any spiritual sweetness and delight, but rather of aridities and distaste, because of the novelty of the change. The palate accustomed to sensible sweetness looks for it still. And the spiritual palate is not prepared and purified for so delicious a taste until it shall have been for some time disposed for it in this arid and dark night. . . .”

But when these aridities arise in the purgative way of the sensual appe-

12 This period of transition has been rightly compared to what happens in children when they are weaned in order that they may have more solid food. They miss the savor of the milk which they are deprived of, and they are not yet accustomed to the taste of the new food that is given them.

tite, the spirit though at first without any sweetness, for the reasons I have given, is conscious of strength and energy to act because of the substantial nature of its interior food, which is the commencement of contemplation, dim and dry to the senses. This contemplation is in general secret, and unknown to him who is admitted into it, and with the aridity and emptiness which it produces in the senses, it makes the soul long for solitude and quiet, without the power of reflecting on anything distinctly, or even desiring to do so.

Now, if they who are in this state knew how to be quiet, . . . they would have, in this tranquillity, a most delicious sense of this interior food. This food is so delicate that, in general, it eludes our perceptions if we make any special effort to feel it; it is like the air which vanishes when we shut our hands to grasp it. For this is God's way of bringing the soul into this state; the road by which He leads it is so different from the first, that if it will do anything in its own strength, it will hinder rather than aid His work. Therefore, at this time, all that the soul can do of itself ends, as I have said, in disturbing the peace and the work of God in the spirit amid the dryness of sense.[13]

The third sign we have for ascertaining whether this dryness be the purgation of sense, is inability to meditate and make reflections, and to excite the imagination, as before, notwithstanding all the efforts we may make; for God begins now to communicate Himself, no longer through the channel of sense, as formerly, in consecutive reflections, by which we arranged and divided our knowledge, but in pure spirit, which admits not of successive reflections, and in the act of pure contemplation (to which the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost gives rise in us).[14]

In regard to this third sign, St. John of the Cross points out that this inability to meditate in a reasoned or discursive manner "does

[13] Evidendy all that St. John says links up rationally; it is also clear that we have to do here with a normal progress of the spiritual life and not something extraordinary, like visions, revelations, or the stigmata.

It is likewise patent that the soul, which until now has meditated according to a reasoned and somewhat mechanical method, should experience the need of a more simple, profound, lively, and loving view of the things of God. It is explicable that it is hardly possible for the soul to return, at least habitually, to a reasoned meditation in three points. Likewise if, after a child begins to read little poems and stories, they are taken away from him and he is put at deciphering the alphabet or spelling out words, he would be unable to tolerate this. He has gone beyond the simple stage. There is no longer any interest for him or any life in spelling since he knows how to read fluently, laic advances, and a man's life cannot be reduced to what it was ten years earlier; the same is true in the spiritual life.

[14] *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. 9.

not arise out of any bodily ailment. When it arises from this, the indisposition, which is always changeable, having ceased, the powers of the soul recover their former energies and find their previous satisfactions at once. It is otherwise in the purgation of the appetite, for as soon as we enter upon this, the inability to make our meditations continually grows. It is true that this purgation at first is not continuous in some persons." [10]

Though this state is manifested by two negative characteristics (sensible aridity and great difficulty in meditating according to a reasoned manner), evidently the most important element in it is the positive side, that is, initial infused contemplation and the keen desire for God to which it gives rise in us. It must even be admitted that then sensible aridity and the difficulty in meditating come precisely from the fact that grace takes a new, purely spiritual form, superior to the senses and to the discourse of reason, which makes use of the imagination. Here the Lord seems to take from the soul, for He deprives it of sensible consolation, but in reality He bestows a precious gift, nascent contemplation and a love that is more spiritual, pure, and strong. Only, we must keep in mind the saying: "The roots of knowledge are bitter and the fruits sweet"; the same must be said in a higher order of the roots and fruits of contemplation.

[10] *Ibid.* In *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* (Bk. II, chaps, ijf.), St. John of the Cross had already indicated these three signs in order to point out the suitable time to pass from discursive meditation to contemplation; and even in the *Ascent* he was speaking of infused contemplation, for in chapter 14 he says that contemplation "is that general knowledge, wherein the spiritual powers of the soul, memory, understanding, and will, are exerted. This general knowledge . . . is at times so subtle and delicate . . . that the soul, though in the practice thereof, is not observant or conscious of it." In chapter 15 the saint says: "But when this state is attained to, meditation ceases, and the faculties labor no more; for then we may rather say that intelligence and sweetness are wrought in the soul, and that it itself abstains from every effort, except only that it attends lovingly upon God, without any desire to feel or see anything further than to be in the hands of God, who now communicates Himself to the soul, thus passive, as the light of the sun to Him whose eyes are opened." The state described in the passage just quoted is not different from that described in *The Dark Night* (Bk. I, chap. 9).

As is increasingly admitted today, and as the first commentators held (cf. "Saint Jean de la Croix," *Diet, de théol. cath.),* these chapters of *The Ascent* do not describe a state which precedes in time that which *The Dark Night* speaks of *(ibid.)·,* rather, they show its active aspect, the conduct to be followed then, whereas *The Dark Night* shows its passive aspect.

The Cause of This State

The theological explanation of this state is to be found in four causes. We already know its formal and material causes from the fact that St. John of the Cross tells us that it is a passive purification of the sensibility. Several authors insist on its final cause or end, which is easily discovered, and do not give sufficient attention to its efficient cause.

The passage just quoted from St. John of the Cross indicates the efficient cause. It is, in fact, a special and purifying action of God, from which comes, says the saint, a beginning of infused contemplation. In this contemplation we have the explanation of the keen desire for God experienced by the soul, since man ardently desires only that of which he experimentally knows the charm. This keen desire for God and for perfection is itself the explanation of the fear of falling back (filial fear). Finally, sensible aridity is explained by the fact that the special grace then given is purely spiritual and not sensible; it is a higher form of life. St. John's text explains this state rationally.

On penetrating more deeply into the theological explanation of this state, we observe that in it there is a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, whose influence then becomes more manifest. Theology teaches that every just soul possesses the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, which enable it to receive His inspirations with docility and promptness.[16] Here, therefore, the influence of the gifts is quite manifest, especially those gifts of knowledge, filial fear, and fortitude.

The gift of knowledge, in fact, explains the first sign pointed out by St. John of the Cross: "No comfort in the things of God and none also in created things." The gift of knowledge, according to Sr. Augustine [17] and St. Thomas,[18] makes us know experimentally the emptiness of created things, all that is defectible and deficient in them and in ourselves. Knowledge indeed differs from wisdom inasmuch as it knows things not by their supreme cause, but by their

[16] Cf. St. Thomas, la Ilae, q. 68, a. i–j.

[17] *Lib. I de sermone Domini in monte,* chap. 4: "Those who weep are they who know by what evils they have been conquered, because they desired them as goods." They weep over all that concupiscence and pride have made them lose.

[18] See Ila Ilae, q.9, a.4.

proximate, defectible, and deficient cause. For this reason, according to St. Augustine, the gift of knowledge corresponds to the beatitude of tears. The tears of contrition come actually from the knowledge of the gravity of sin and the nothingness of creatures. The gift of knowledge reminds us of what Ecclesiastes says: "Vanity of vanities, . . . and all things are vanity," except to love God and to serve Him.[19] This thought is repeatedly expressed in *The Imitation* [20] and in the works of great mystics like Ruysbroeck.[21] Before St. John of the Cross, Ruysbroeck pointed out the relations of the gift of knowledge to the passive purification of the senses, in which the soul knows by experience the emptiness of created things and is led thereby to a keen desire for God.[22]

In the passive purification of the senses which we are speaking of, there is also a manifest influence of the gifts of fear and fortitude, as the second sign given by St. John of the Cross indicates: "The true purgative aridity is accompanied in general by a painful anxiety because the soul thinks that it is not serving God. . . . For when mere bodily indisposition is the cause, all that it does is to produce disgust and the ruin of bodily health, without the desire of serving God which belongs to the purgative aridity. In this aridity, though the sensual part of man is greatly depressed, weak and sluggish in good works, by reason of the little satisfaction they furnish, the spirit is, nevertheless, ready and strong." [23]

The second sign manifests, therefore, an effect of the gift of fear, of filial fear, not the fear of punishment but that of sin. Filial fear evidently grows with the progress of charity, whereas servile fear, or that of punishment, diminishes.[24] By the special inspiration of this gift the soul resists the strong temptations against chastity and patience which often accompany the passive purification of the senses. The Christian, who then experiences his indigence, repeats

[18] Eccles. 11:8.

[20] Cf. *The Imitation,* Bk. III, chap. 42: "That peace is not to be placed in men; Without Me friendship can neither profit nor endure." Chap. 43: "Against vain and worldly learning; Never read anything in order that thou mayest appear more learned or more wise."

[21] *Le Royaume des amants de Dieu,* chap. 18; *L'Ornement des noces spirituelles,* Bk. II, chap. 5.

[22] Cf. *L'Ornement des noces spirituelles,* Bk II, chap. 63, in which the gifts of fear, piety, and knowledge, and their purifying influence are discussed.

[23] *The Dark Night,* Bk. 1, chap. 9.

[24] Cf. IIa IIae, q. 19, a.9, 11.

the words of the Psalmist: "Pierce Thou my flesh with Thy fear: for I am afraid of Thy judgments." [28] According to St. Augustine, the gift of fear corresponds to the beatitude of the poor,[20] of those who do not pose as masters, but who begin to love seriously the humility of the hidden life that they may become more like our Lord. In this poverty they find true riches: "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

In the keen desire to serve God which St. John of the Cross speaks of here, a desire that subsists in spite of aridity, temptations, difficulties, there is, at the same time, a manifest effect of the gift of fortitude, corresponding to the fourth beatitude: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill." [27] The ardent desire to serve God at no matter what cost is truly this hunger, which the Lord arouses in us. He gives rise to it and He satisfies it, as was said to Daniel: "I am come to show it to thee, because thou art a man of desires."[28] The gift of fortitude comes here, in the midst of difficulties and contradictions, to the assistance of the virtues of patience and longanimity; without it spiritual enthusiasm would die away like sensible enthusiasm. This is the time when man must give heed to what *The Imitation* says about the holy way of the cross: "Follow Jesus, and thou shalt go into life everlasting. He is gone before thee, carrying His cross. . . . If thou carry the cross willingly, it will carry thee and bring thee to thy desired end. . . . And sometimes he gaineth such strength through affection to tribulation and adversity, by his love of conformity to the cross of Christ, as not to be willing to be without suffering and affliction. . . . This is not man's power but the grace of Christ, which doth and can effect such great things in frail flesh, and that what it naturally abhors and flies, even this, through fervor of spirit, it now embraces and loves [i.e., to bear the cross]." [29]

Finally, the third sign which St. John of the Cross speaks of, "the growing difficulty in meditating discursively," shows the influence

[26] Ps. 118:120.
[27] Cf. IIa IIae, q. 19, a. 12.
[28] *Ibid.,* q. 139, a. 2.
[29] Dan. 9:23.
[20] Bk. II, chap. 12. Ruysbroeck speaks in the same manner of the gift of fortitude in *L'Ornement des noces spirituelles* (Bk. II, chap. 64): "By it man wills to surmount every obstacle and to disregard all consolation in order to find Him whom he loves."

of the gift of understanding, the source of initial infused contemplation, above reasoning.[30] In the same chapter of *The Dark Night,* [31] the saint speaks in exact terms of this "beginning of obscure and arid contemplation" by which God nourishes the soul while purifying it and giving it strength to go beyond the figures, to penetrate the meaning of the formulas of faith that it may reach the superior simplicity which characterizes contemplation.[32]

St. Thomas also speaks clearly on this subject: "The other cleanness of heart is a kind of complement to the sight of God; such is the cleanness of the mind that is purged of phantasms and errors, so as to receive the truths which are proposed to it about God, no longer by way of corporeal phantasms, nor infected with heretical misrepresentations; and this cleanness is the result of the gift of understanding."[33] Thereby this gift preserves us from possible deviations and makes us go beyond the letter of the Gospel to attain its spirit; it begins to make us penetrate, beyond the formulas of faith, the depths of the mysteries that they express. The formula is no longer a term but a point of departure. This purifying influence of the gift of understanding will be exercised especially in the passive purification of the spirit, but even at this stage it is manifest. Under the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the soul now makes an act of penetrating faith, which is called an infused act, for it cannot be produced without this special inspiration.[34]

Thus there begins to be realized what St. Thomas also points out:

[30] The beginning of superdiscursivç contemplation interrupts reasoning, which made use of the imagination. Then are produced involuntary distractions of the imagination, which, not being methodically occupied, wanders more or less until it grows drowsy, falls asleep, when the power of the mind *(vis animae)* will be wholly inclined toward loving contemplation in the higher faculties.

These distractions of the imagination are not produced in the theologian while he is reasoning, or in the preacher while he is preaching; their reasoning would be arrested. They are produced at the beginning of superdiscursive contemplation, which does not make use of the linking of images, and the unoccupied imagination cannot by itself become interested in the wholly spiritual object which is then in a confused manner the object of the intellect.

[31] Cf. Bk. I, chap. 9.

[32] Cf. Ruysbroeck, *op. cit.,* Bk. 11, chap. 66: "The first radiation of the gift of understanding creates simplicity in the spirit," a participation in the eminent simplicity of God.

[33] Cf. IIa IIae, q.8, a.7.

[34] Cf. la Ilae, q.61, a. 5: "Whether the cardinal virtues are fittingly divided into social virtues, perfecting, perfect, and exemplar virtues."

"But on the part of the soul, before it arrives at this uniformity (of contemplation, symbolized by the uniformity of circular movement, without beginning or end), its twofold lack of uniformity needs to be removed. First, that which arises from the variety of external things . . . and from the discoursing of reason. This is done by directing all the soul's operations to the simple contemplation of the intelligible truth,"[35] a process which begins to be realized in the passive purification of the senses. Here, for example, a theologian will see the entire tract on predestination and that on grace reduced to this simple principle: "Since God's love is the cause of goodness in things, no one thing would be better than another if God did not will greater good for one than for another."[88]

St. Augustine, in treating of the degrees of the life of the soul,[37] pointed out that the life of true virtue begins by a purification, which he called *"purificationis negotium . . . , opus tam difficile mundationis animae?'* Such is, we believe, according to the great masters,[38] the explanation of this state or period of transition, which is manifested by the subtraction of sensible graces, but which is in reality the beginning of infused contemplation, the threshold of the mystical life, in which grace is given under a new form, more freed from the senses, that it may spiritualize us, make us attain the vivifying spirit under the letter of the Gospel, and cause us truly to live by it.[39]

[88] See Ila Ilae, q. 180, a. 6 ad zum.

[··] Cf. la, q.2O, a. 3 f.

["] *De quantitate animae,* Bk. I, chap. 33, fourth step: The life of true virtue. *De sermone in monte,* where he compares the seven gifts with the evangelical beatitudes.

[''] Cf. St. Gregory, *Moral.,* XXIV, chap. 6; X, chaps. 10, 17; *In Ezech.,* Bk. II, homil. II, 2, 3, 13. Hugh of St. Victor, *Homil. l in Eccli. The Imitation of Christ* Bk. Ill, chap. 31: This chapter offers a good summary of what we have just said and shows why there are so few contemplatives: because there are so few men detached from the things of the world.

[88] What we have just said may be summed up in the following table, which should be read from the bottom up:

Signs of the passive purification of the senses

Psychological Description According to St. John of the Cross	*Theological Explanation* By the Gifts of the Holy Ghost
j. *Great difficulty in meditating discursively,* an attraction for	*Inspiration of the gift of understanding,* beginning of infused

Note

To distinguish neurasthenia from the passive purifications, we should note that the most frequent symptoms in neurasthenics are the following: almost continual fatigue, even when they have not worked, accompanied by a feeling of prostration, of discouragement; habitual headaches (the sensation of wearing a helmet, a leaden cap; dull pains at the nape of the neck or in the spinal column); insomnia, to such an extent that the neurasthenic wakes up more tired than when he went to bed; difficulty in exercising the intellectual faculties and in maintaining attention; impressionability (intense emotions for very slight causes), which leads the sufferer to believe that he has illnesses that he does not really have; excessive self-analysis even to minute details, continual preoccupation not to become ill.40

Neurasthenics are, however, not imaginary invalids; the powerlessness they experience is real, and it would be very imprudent to urge them to disregard their fatigue and work to the limit of their strength. What they lack is not will, but power.

The causes of neurasthenia may be organic like infections, endocrine or liver troubles, pre-paralysis; but often the causes are also psychical: intellectual overloading, moral worries, painful emotions, which constitute too heavy a load for the nervous system. Even in these last cases, where the cause of the disease is mental, the illness itself affects the organism. For this reason neurasthenics must absolutely be made to rest; and they must be progressively led to perform easy tasks proportionate to their strength, and be encouraged.

the simple affective gaze toward God.	contemplation.
2. *Keen desire to serve God,* thirst for justice, and fear of sin. Resistance to temptations.	*Inspiration of the gift of fortitude,* which in the midst of difficulties preserves the hunger and thirst for justice, and influence of the *gift of fear* to resist temptations.
I. *Sensible aridity,* no consolation in the things of God, or in created things.	*Inspiration of the gift of knowledge,* which shows the vanity and emptiness of everything created, the gravity of sin, whence the tears of true contrition.

** Cf. R. de Sinéty, *Psychopathologie et direction,* 1934, pp. 66-87.

We should also note that psychoneuroses may be associated with a developed intellectual life and a lofty moral life. Consequently we see, as St. John of the Cross pointed out in speaking of the three signs of the passive night of the senses, that this night may exist simultaneously with melancholia, or neurasthenia as it is called today. But we see also that the passive night is distinguished from this state of nervous fatigue by the second sign (the soul ordinarily keeps the memory of God with solicitude and painful anxiety for fear it may be falling back), and by the third sign (the quasi-impossibility to meditate, but the ability to keep a simple and loving gaze on God, the beginning of infused contemplation). The ardent desire for God and for perfection, which is manifested by these signs, distinguishes notably this passive purification from neurasthenia which may sometimes co-exist with it.

CHAPTER V

Conduct to Be Observed in the Night of the Senses

IN *The Dark Night,* St. John of the Cross treats of the conduct to be observed in the night of the senses.[1] He gives there, first of all, rules for direction, then he speaks of the trials which ordinarily accompany this state. We shall set forth here the essential pan of his teaching on this point. This teaching may, moreover, be useful not only for those who are in this period of obscurity and prolonged aridity, but also for those who observe that in their interior life day and night alternate somewhat as they do in nature. The author of *The Imitation* frequently points out this alternation. As in nature it is good that night succeed day, so also is it suitable in the life of the soul. Furthermore, one must know how to conduct oneself in these two phases that differ so greatly; especially is this knowledge necessary when the obscure phase is prolonged, as it is in the period we are considering.

Four Rules of Direction Relative to This State

The mystical doctor points out first of all in regard to those who are in this period of transition: "If they meet with no one who understands the matter, these persons fall away and abandon the right road; or they become weak, or at least put hindrances in the way of their further advancement, because of the great efforts they make to proceed in their former way of meditation, fatiguing their natural powers beyond measure." At this time, it is advisable for them to seek counsel from an enlightened director because of the difficulties which arise in the interior life by reason of the subtrac-

[1] Cf. Bk. I, chap. io.

tion of sensible graces, the growing difficulty in meditating, and also by reason of the concomitant temptations against chastity and patience which the devil then awakens rather frequently in order to turn the soul away from prayer.

In the second place, says St. John of the Cross: "It behooves those who find themselves in this condition to take courage and persevere in patience. Let them not afflict themselves but put their confidence in God, who never forsakes those who seek Him with a pure and upright heart. Neither will He withhold from them all that is necessary for them on this road until He brings them to the clear and pure light of love, which He will show them in that other dark night of the spirit, if they shall merit an entrance into it." Consequently, in this aridity and powerlessness one must not become discouraged or abandon prayer as if it were useless. On the contrary, it becomes much more fruitful if the soul perseveres in humility, abnegation, and trust in God. Prolonged sensible aridity and growing inability to meditate are the sign of a new, higher life. Instead of grieving over this condition, a learned and experienced director rejoices; it is the generous entrance into "the narrow way" which ascends as it broadens, and which will become increasingly wide, immense as God Himself to whom it leads. At this stage the soul is under the happy necessity.of not being content with weak acts of faith, hope, and love. Imperfect acts *(actus remissi)* of these virtues no longer suffice here; more lofty and more meritorious acts are necessary. According to St. Thomas, it is characteristic of these acts to obtain immediately the increase of grace and charity which they merit.[2]

The spiritual man who has reached this stage is like a man who in climbing a mountain comes to a difficult spot where, to make progress, he must have a keener desire for the goal to be attained. We are here at the aurora of the illuminative life; it richly deserves that we show generosity in our passage through the dark night which precedes it. Here it is a question of being purified from the remains of the seven capital sins that stain the spiritual life; if one is not purified from them on earth while meriting, one must be cleansed in purgatory without meriting.

The passive purification which we are speaking of is in the normal way of sanctity, which may be defined as union with God and sufficient purity to enter heaven immediately. This degree of purity

[2] Cf. Ila Ilae, q.i4, a.6.

is certainly in the normal way of heaven, whether a person obtains it on earth, or only at the end of his purgatory. Purgatory, which is a penalty, presupposes sins that could have been avoided. Therefore the soul should trust in God while this painful work of purification is being accomplished.

In the third place, as St. John of the Cross points out here,[3] when persons can no longer meditate discursively: "All they have to do is to keep their soul free, . . . contenting themselves simply with directing their attention lovingly and calmly toward God." To wish to return at any cost to discursive meditation, would be to wish to run counter to the current of grace instead of following it, and to give ourselves great trouble without profit. It would be like running toward the spring of living water when we have already reached its brim; continuing to run, we withdraw from it. It would be like continuing to spell when we already know how to read several words at a glance. It would be to fall back instead of allowing ourselves to be drawn, to be lifted up by God. However, if the difficulty in meditating does not increase and makes itself felt only from time to time, it is well to return to simplified, affective meditation whenever possible: for example, to the very slow meditation of the Our Father.

St. John gives a fourth rule of direction for those who, having reached this state of prolonged aridity, wish, not to return to reasoned meditation, but to feel some consolation. St. John of the Cross says on this subject: "All they have to do is to keep their soul free, . . . and all this without anxiety or effort, or immoderate desire to feel and taste His presence. For all such efforts disquiet the soul, and distract it from the peaceful quiet and sweet tranquillity of contemplation to which they are now admitted.[4] . . . If they were now to exert their interior faculties, they would simply hinder and ruin the good which, in that repose, God is working in the soul; for if a man while sitting for his portrait cannot be still, but moves

[3] *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. io.

[4] The word "quiet" used in this connection on several occasions by St. John of the Cross, shows that the state to which he refers corresponds to the fourth mansion of St. Teresa, that of passive recollection and quiet, in which the will is captivated and rests in God under a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost. During this time a certain involuntary wandering of the imagination may be produced, since the imagination, which is not yet lulled, cannot become interested in a purely spiritual object.

about, the painter will never depict his face, and even the work already done will be spoiled. . . . The more it strives to find help in affections and knowledge, the more will it feel the deficiency which cannot now be supplied in that way."[6] In other words, natural activity exercising itself counter to the gifts of the Holy Ghost, through self-seeking opposes an obstacle to their most delicate inspirations. In prayer, we should not seek to feel the gift of God, but should receive it with docility and disinterestedness in the obscurity of faith. Spiritual joy will be added later on to the act of contemplation and love of God; but it is not joy that should be sought, it is God Himself, who is greatly superior to His gifts.

If the soul that has reached this period of transition is faithful to what has been said, then will be realized what St. John of the Cross affirms: "By not hindering the operation of infused contemplation, to which God is now admitting it, the soul is refreshed in peaceful abundance, and set on fire with the spirit of love, which this contemplation, dim and secret, induces and establishes within it."[8]

As the mystical doctor says: "The soul should content itself simply with directing its attention lovingly and calmly toward God," with the general knowledge of His infinite goodness, as when after months of absence, a loving son again meets his good mother who has been expecting him. He does not analyze his sentiments and his mother's as a psychologist would; he is content with an affectionate, tranquil, and profound gaze which in its simplicity is far more penetrating than all psychological analyses.

This beginning of infused contemplation united to love is already the eminent exercise of the theological virtues and of the gifts of the Holy Ghost which accompany them. In it there is an infused act of penetrating faith;[7] therein the soul discovers increasingly

[5] *The Dark Night, loc. cit.*

[6] *Ibid.* At the beginning of this same chapter, St. John declares that it is thus "God makes the soul pass from meditation to contemplation," that is, to infused contemplation, as has been affirmed. He is not concerned here with acquired contemplation, but with the infusion of the sweet light of life.

[7] This act is called infused because it would not be produced without a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, an inspiration which the gifts dispose us to receive. In it there is an influence of the gifts of knowledge and of understanding, which render faith more penetrating and certain. It is one and the same act, which is an act of faith and an act of penetrating faith; there are in it the two subordinated formal motives of the virtue of faith (the authority of God revealing) and of the gift of understanding (the

the spirit of the Gospel, the spirit which vivifies the letter. Thus are verified Christ's words: "The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you." [8] St. John also wrote to the faithful to whom he directed his first epistle: "And as for you, let the unction, which you have received from Him, abide in you.[9] And you have no need that any man teach you; . . . His unction teacheth you of all things." [10]*In the silence of prayer, the soul receives here the profound meaning of what it has often read and meditated on in the Gospel: for example, the intrinsic meaning of the evangelical beatitudes: blessed are the poor, the meek, those who weep for their sins, those who hunger and thirst for justice, the merciful, the pure of heart, the peacemakers, those who suffer persecution for justice, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

In this way, as a rule, begins infused prayer, the spiritual elevation of the soul toward God, above the senses, the imagination, and reasoning; it is adoration "in spirit and in truth," which goes beyond the formulas of faith to penetrate the mysteries which they express and to live by them. The formulas are no longer a term, but a point of departure.

Nevertheless we should remember here what St. John of the Cross says in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel:* "The beginning contemplative is not yet so far removed from discursive meditation that he cannot return occasionally to its practice," [11] when he is no longer under the special influence of the Holy Ghost, which facilitates recollection. St. Teresa, in her *Life* (chap. 14), also speaks of the necessity at the beginning of the prayer of quiet of having recourse

special illumination of the Holy Ghost, as an objective regulation).

We have here something analogous to what is produced in a real musician who, in an artistic rendition of a symphony of Beethoven, receives at a given moment a musical inspiration that makes him penetrate more deeply into the soul of this symphony. Similarly the act of living faith has a meritorious modality which comes to it from charity, a modality which is not in the act of infused faith of a Christian in the state of mortal sin.

•John 14:26.

•The unction received remains in effect permanently even during our sleep, under the form of sanctifying grace and of the *habitus infusi,* which spring from it, that is, the infused virtues and the seven gifts: the *sacrum septenarium* which the liturgy speaks of, and which is *always* in all the just.

[10] Cf. I John 2:27.

[11] Bk. II, chap. 13.

to a simplified meditation, symbolized by the hydraulic machine called a *noria.* This passage from St. Teresa's life corresponds to what St. John of the Cross has just said about the work of the understanding, which prepares the soul to receive a more profound recollection from God. Thus it is fitting at the beginning of prayer to meditate slowly on the petitions of the Our Father, or to converse in a childlike manner with Mary Mediatrix that she may lead us to close union with her Son. It is well for us to recall how He Himself gave His life for us and how He does not cease to offer Himself for us in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. If we follow this way faithfully, we shall receive, at least from time to time, an interior light that will give us the profound meaning of the Passion and also of the infinite riches contained in the Holy Eucharist. Thus our interior life will grow more simple while becoming more lofty, which is essential if it is to radiate and to bear fruit.

We may sum up the conduct to be observed in the passive purification of the senses, called also the night of the senses, as follows: docility to the director, trust in God, a simple and loving gaze on Him, abstention from seeking to feel consolation. To complete this chapter, we must also speak of the trials which frequently accompany this period of transition.

Trials Which Ordinarily Accompany the Night of the Senses

To this painful purification in which, under the influence of the gift of knowledge, we experience the emptiness of created things, are customarily added temptations against chastity and patience. These temptations are permitted by God to provoke a strong reaction of these virtues, which have their seat in the sensible appetites. This reaction should strengthen these virtues, root them more deeply, and thereby purify more profoundly the sensibility in which they are located, and subject it increasingly to right reason illumined by faith. For a like reason, there will be in the night of the spirit temptations of the same kind against the virtues which are in the highest part of the soul, especially against the theological virtues.

These concomitant trials have an attenuated form in many souls; in others they arc more accentuated and then they announce that

God wishes to lead these souls to the full perfection of Christian life if they are faithful.[12]

The struggle against the temptations of which we are speaking necessitates energetic acts of the virtues of chastity and patience; as a result these virtues then take deeper root in the sensibility that has been tilled and upturned. They become in it like very fertile seeds of a higher life. The acquired moral virtues cause the direction of right reason to descend, in fact, into the sensibility, and the infused moral virtues cause the divine life of grace to penetrate into it. Thus conceived, this struggle against temptation has a great and beautiful character. Without it we would often be content with a lesser effort, with weak, less intense, virtuous acts, *actus remissi,* as theologians call them, that is, acts inferior to the degree of virtue that we possess. Having three talents, we act as if we had only two. These weak virtuous acts, as St. Thomas points out,[13] do not immediately obtain the increase of charity which they merit, whereas intense or perfect acts obtain it immediately.

Temptation places us in the necessity of producing these very meritorious acts, occasionally heroic, which root the acquired virtues and obtain immediately for us a proportionate increase of the infused virtues. For this reason, the angel Raphael said to Tobias: "Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee." [14] St. Paul also says: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it." [15] Isaias speaks in like manner: "It is He that giveth strength to the weary, and increaseth force and might to them that are not. . . . But they that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall take wings as eagles." [13]

Temptation reveals to us our misery and our need of the grace of God: "What doth he know, that hath not been tried?" [17] Temptation obliges us to pray, to beg God to come to our aid, to place our confidence in Him and not in ourselves. Because of this trust in God which the man who is tried should have, St. Paul writes: "For when

[12] *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. 14.
[13] Cf. Ia IIae, q.52, a. 3; IIa IIae, q.24, a.6 ad mm.
[14] Tob. 12:13.
[15] Cf. I Cor. 10:13.
[13] Isa. 40:29, 31.
[17] Ecclus. 34:9.

I am weak, then am I powerful." [18] The apostle St. James also says: "My brethren, count it all joy when you shall fall into divers temptations; knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience. And patience hath a perfect work; that you may be perfect." [18]

To these temptations against chastity and patience is also added at times in this period of the interior life the loss of certain temporal goods, of fortune, honors, friendships on which we dwelt too much. God comes at this time to ask us to give Him the lively affection which we have not thought of giving to Him. Sometimes He also permits illnesses, that we may learn to suffer, and also that we may be reminded that of ourselves we can do nothing and that we need the divine favors for the life of the body and that of the soul.

The Effects of the Passive Purification of the Senses

If we bear these trials well, they produce precious effects in us. It is said that "patience produces roses." Among the effects of the passive purification of the senses, must be numbered a profound and experimental knowledge of God and self.

St. John of the Cross points out: "These aridities and the emptiness of the faculties as to their former abounding, and the difficulty which good works present, bring the soul to a knowledge of its own vileness and misery." [20]

This knowledge is the effect of nascent infused contemplation, which shows that infused contemplation is in the normal way of sanctity. St. John of the Cross says: "The soul possesses and retains more truly that excellent and necessary virtue of self-knowledge, counting itself for nothing, and having no satisfaction in itself, because it sees that of itself it does and can do nothing. This diminished satisfaction with self, and the affliction it feels because it thinks that it is not serving God, God esteems more highly than all its former delights and all its good works." [21]

With this knowledge of its indigence, its poverty, the soul comprehends better the majesty of God, His infinite goodness toward

[18] Cf. II Cor. 12:10.
[19] Jas. 1:2-4.
[20] *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. 12.
[21] *Ibid.*

us, the value also of Christ's merits, of His precious blood, the infinite value of the Mass, and the value of Communion. "God enlightens the soul, making it see not only its own misery and meanness, . . . but also His grandeur and majesty." [22]

St. Teresa speaks in like manner: "For instance, they read that we must not be troubled when men speak ill of us, that we are to be then more pleased than when they speak well of us, . . . with many other things of the same kind. The disposition to practice this must be, in my opinion, the gift of God, for it seems to me a supernatural good." [23] "People may desire honors or possessions in monasteries as well as outside them (yet the sin is greater as the temptation is less), but such souls, although they may have spent years in prayer, or rather in speculations (for *perfect prayer eventually destroys these vices),* will never make great progress nor enjoy the real fruit of prayer." [24]

St. Catherine of Siena, too, taught the same doctrine: that the knowledge of God and that of our indigence are like the highest and the lowest points of a circle which could grow forever.[25] This infused knowledge of our misery is the source of true humility of heart, of the humility which leads one to desire to be nothing that God may be all, *amare nesciri et pro nihilo reputari.* Infused knowledge of the infinite goodness of God gives birth in us to a much more lively charity, a more generous and disinterested love of God and of souls in Him, a greater confidence in prayer.

As St. John of the Cross says: "The love of God is practiced, because the soul is no longer attracted by sweetness and consolation, but by God only. . . . In the midst of these aridities and hardships, God communicates to the soul, when it least expects it, spiritual sweetness, most pure love, and spiritual knowledge of the most exalted kind, of greater worth and profit than any of which it had previous experience, though at first the soul may not think so, for

[22] *Ibid.*

[23] *Life,* by herself, chap. 31.

[24] *The Way of Perfection,* chap. 12, par. 5.

[25] *The Dialogue,* chap. 4: "In self-knowledge, then, thou wilt humble thyself, seeing that, in thyself, thou dost not even exist; for thy very being, as thou wilt learn, is derived from Me, since I have loved both thee and others before you were in existence." *Ibid.,* chaps. 7, 9, and 18: "I am who am; you are not in yourselves."

the spiritual influence now communicated is most delicate and imperceptible by sense." 28

The soul travels here in a spiritual light and shade; it rises above the inferior obscurity which comes from matter, error, and sin; it enters the higher obscurity which comes from a light that is too great for our weak eyes. It is the obscurity of the divine life, the light of which is inaccessible to the senses and to natural reason. But between these two obscurities, the lower and the higher, there is a ray of illumination from the Holy Ghost; it is the illuminative life which truly begins. Then are realized the Savior's words: "He that followeth Me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life," 27 and he already has it.

Under this light, affective charity becomes effective and generous. Through the spirit of sacrifice it more and more takes first place in the soul; it establishes peace in us and gives it to others. Such are the principal effects of the passive purification of the senses, which subjects our sensibility to the spirit and spiritualizes that sensibility. Thus this purification appears in the normal way of sanctity. Later the passive purification of the spirit will have as its purpose to supernaturalize our spirit, to subject it fully to God in view of perfect divine union, which is the normal prelude to that of eternity. These are the superior laws of the life of grace, or of its full development, in its relation to the two parts of the soul. The senses should, in the end, be fully subjected to the spirit, and the spirit to God.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the passive purification of the senses, even for those who enter it, is more or less manifest and also more or less well borne. St. John of the Cross points out this fact when he speaks of those who show less generosity: "The night of aridities is not continuous with them, they are sometimes in it, and sometimes not; they are at one time unable to meditate, and at another able as before. . . . These persons are never wholly weaned from the breasts of meditations and reflections, but only, as I have said, at intervals and at certain seasons." 28 In *The Living Flame,* the mystical doctor, explaining why this is so, says: "Because these souls flee purifying suffering, God does not continue to purify

" *The Dark Night,* Bk. 1, chap. 13.
*¶ John 8:12.
a" *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. 9.

them; they wish to be perfect without allowing themselves to be led by the way of trial which forms the perfect.''[29]

Such is the more or less generous transition to a form of higher life. We see the logical and vital succession of phases through which the soul should pass to reach the perfect purity that would permit it to enter heaven immediately. It is not a mechanical juxtaposition of successive states: it is the organic development of life. In his discussion of this point St. John of the Cross caused spiritual theology to advance notably, by showing the necessity and the intimate nature of these purifications, which are an anticipated purgatory in which one merits and advances, whereas in that after death, one no longer merits. May the Lord grant us the grace thus to suffer our purgatory before death rather than after our last sigh. In the evening of life we shall be judged on the purity of our love of God and of souls in God.

[20] *The Living Flame,* st. 2, v. 5. It is clear that in the opinion of St. John of the Cross these souls show a lack of generosity, which does not appear in those predestined from all eternity to a high degree of perfection, the requisite condition for the special degree of glory winch God willed for them. St. John of the Cross speaks of predestination in the same terms as St. Thomas, when he says: "Every soul, according to its measure, great or little, may attain to this union, yet all do not in an equal degree, but only as our Lord shall give unto each, as it is with the blessed in heaven" *(The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. *1,* chap. 5).

On this point see what we have said elsewhere, *Perfection chrétienne et contemplation,* 7th ed., II, 472-76; appendix pp. [121]-[125].

CHAPTER VI

The Spiritual Age of Proficients
Principal Characteristics

SINCE we have discussed the difficult period called the night of the senses, which, according to St. John of the Cross, marks the entrance into the illuminative way of proficients, we should now point out the principal traits of the spiritual character of proficients, the characteristics of this age of the interior life.[1]

The mentality of proficients should be described by insisting on their knowledge and love of God, and by noting the differences between this spiritual age and the preceding one, just as one remarks those of adolescence and childhood. The adolescent is not only a grown-up child, but he has also a new mentality; he sees things in a less imaginative, more rational manner; he has different preoccupations, just as the child is not an adolescent in miniature. From the spiritual point of view there is something similar in respect to the different ages of the interior life.

The Knowledge of God in Proficients

In the preceding period, the beginner scarcely knew God except in the mirror of sensible things, whether in those of nature, or in those mentioned in the parables of the Gospel, or in the exterior

[1] In Volume I, chapter 14, we stated that, just as there is in the natural order, about the age of fourteen, a crisis of puberty and of the awkward age in the passage from childhood to adolescence, and another at twenty-two years of age, the crisis of first liberty, when the young man leaves his parents in order to live independently—so from the spiritual point of view there is the crisis of the passive purification of the senses, or the night of the senses, at the entrance to the illuminative way, and later on the crisis of the passive purification of the spirit, or night of the spirit, at the entrance to the unitive way of the perfect, who truly merit this name.

acts of worship; and he knew himself only in a very superficial manner.

The proficient obtained a deeper self-knowledge while passing through the period of prolonged aridity which marks the second conversion. With this knowledge of his poverty, of his spiritual indigence, there grows within him by contrast a quasi-experimental knowledge of God, not only in the mirror of the sensible things of nature, of the parables, of exterior worship, but in the spiritual mirror of the mysteries of salvation with which he familiarizes himself. These mysteries, which are those of the incarnation of the Word, of the redemption, of eternal life, the rosary daily places before our eyes by recalling to us the Savior's childhood, His sorrowful passion, His resurrection and ascension. If the proficient is faithful, he goes beyond the sensible aspect of these mysteries, he attains all that is spiritual in them, the infinite value of the merits of Christ; then the rosary is no longer the mechanical recitation of the Hail Mary, but a living thing, a school of contemplation. The joyful mysteries bring us the good news of the annunciation and the nativity of our Savior, which constitute true, enduring, and deep joys far above the pleasures of the world and the satisfactions of pride. Likewise, in the midst of our sufferings, which are often without reason, at times overwhelming, almost always badly borne, the sorrowful mysteries repeat to us that our sins should be the object of our grief. They make us desire to know them better, to experience a sincere sorrow for them, and thus we begin to comprehend the profound meaning and the infinite value of Christ's passion and its effects in our lives. Finally, in the midst of the instability and uncertainties of this life, the glorious mysteries recall to us the immutability and the perfect happiness of eternal life, which is the goal of our journey.

The proficient who would thus live a little better each day by the spirit of the rosary, would reach the contemplation of the mystery of Christ, a certain penetrating understanding of the life of the mystical body, or of the Church militant, suffering, and triumphant. Under the continual direction of Jesus and of Mary Mediatrix, he would enter increasingly into the mystery of the communion of saints. If he should listen daily to this secret teaching in the depth of his heart, this prayer would kindle in him the desire of heaven, of the glory of God, and the salvation of souls; it would give him

a love of the cross and strength to carry it, and from time to time a foretaste of heaven, a certain savor of eternal life. As a traveler toward eternity *(viator),* he would occasionally enjoy it in hope and would rest on the heart of Him who is the way, the truth, and the life.

The proficient who has such knowledge of God no longer knows Him only in the sensible mirror of the starry sky or of the parables, but in the spiritual mirror of the great mysteries of the Incarnation, the redemption, and eternal life which is promised to us. He thus grows increasingly familiar with these mysteries of faith, he penetrates them a little, tastes them, sees their application to his daily life. According to the terminology of Dionysius, which is preserved by St. Thomas,[2] the soul rises thus by a spiral movement from the mysteries of Christ's childhood to those of His passion, resurrection, ascension, and glory, and in them it contemplates the radiation of the sovereign goodness of God, who thus communicates Himself admirably to us. Goodness is essentially diffusive, and that of God diffuses itself on us by the redeeming Incarnation and by the revelation of eternal life already begun, in a sense, in the life of grace.[3]

In this more or less frequent contemplation, the proficients or advanced receive, in the measure of their fidelity and generosity, the light of the gift of understanding, which renders their faith more penetrating and which makes them glimpse the lofty and simple beauty of these mysteries, a beauty accessible to all those who are truly humble and pure of heart.

Consequently this period of the interior life merits the name of illuminative way. In the preceding period, the Lord conquered our

3 Cf. IIa IIae, q. 180, a. 6.

8 In the passage from St. Thomas which we have just cited, are mentioned three movements which symbolize the elevation of the contemplative soul toward God: the straight movement, the oblique or spiral movement, and the circular movement.

In the period preceding that which we are speaking of, the soul, starting from sensible things, rose toward God like the bird which often rises with a straight movement toward the sky: for example, it rose from the parable of the prodigal son to the consideration of the mercy of God. In the period following the age of proficients, that is, in the unitive life, the soul often attains to a contemplation called circular. In this contemplation the soul returns a number of times to the consideration of the divine goodness which radiates on all things, somewhat like an eagle, which rises into the air with a spiral movement and then describes the same circle several times while contemplating the sun and its radiation over the entire horizon.

sensibility by certain graces, to which the name *sensible* is given because of the sensible consolation they bring. Then the soul, which had become too attached to these sensible consolations, had to be weaned from them that it might receive a more spiritual and substantial food.

Now God conquers our intellect; He enlightens it as He alone can; He renders this superior faculty increasingly docile to His inspirations that it may grasp divine truth. He subjects our intellect to Himself in this way while vivifying it. He gives it lights that are often scarcely perceived, but that make us understand ever better the spirit of the Gospel. He lifts us up above the excessive preoccupations and the complications of a learning that is too human. He makes us aspire to the superior simplicity of the loving gaze which rests in the truth that makes man free. He makes us understand the meaning of these words: "If you continue in My word, you shall be My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." [4] This word will deliver you from the prejudices of the world, from its vain complications, its lies, the shortsightedness of unconscious pride, and from that of covetousness. Divine truth will give itself profoundly to you and will also dispel the false luster of all that can seduce you. It will free you from what Scripture calls "the bewitching of vanity," [6] from the vertigo of passion which blinds you to the true imperishable goods.

In all this there is a knowledge of God and of self notably different from that drawn from books simply by reading. We begin to know in a truly living manner the Gospel, the Eucharist, Jesus Christ, who does not cease to intercede for us and who gives us always new graces to incorporate us in Him, in His mystical body for eternity. The life of the Church appears in its grandeur; we think of the spiritual summits of the Church in our day, which must number very holy souls as it did in the past and as it will in the future. Such is the work of the Holy Ghost in men's hearts.

Books alone cannot give this experimental knowledge. A treatise on the Eucharist will show at some length, by the analysis of scriptural texts, that this sacrament was instituted by Christ; it will defend speculatively the Real Presence and transubstantiation against ancient and modern errors; it will compare the different explana-

[4] John 8:31 f.
[6] Wisd. 4:12.

rions which theologians give of the Sacrifice of the Mass, and will enumerate the fruits of Communion. These books, which are indispensable for the training of the priest, end in precise formulas. These formulas, however, should not be an end for us; for the interior soul they should be a point of departure. To live with a holy realism by the mystery itself, the soul should go beyond them.

By faith in the Eucharist, the interior soul already holds the truths that it needs to know; it is useless for such a soul to embarrass itself with discussions on the history of this dogma, on transubstantiation or the Eucharistic accidents; it needs to live by the truths of faith and of the liturgy, as Book IV of *The Imitation* points out. To live in this way, the soul must receive the inspirations of the Holy Ghost with docility. Not in vain are the seven gifts given to all the just; they are given to perfect the virtues. Thus the gift of understanding should make all the just who are faithful to its inspirations penetrate the meaning and import of the formulas of faith; simple souls who are clean of heart really see this import much better than theologians who are too satisfied with their acquired knowledge. *Mirabilis Deus in sanctis suis.*

The contemplation of divine things may be greatly hindered by self-sufficiency which leads a man to think he already knows the interior life, when, as a matter of fact, he still has much to learn. The study of books will never replace prayer; for this reason the great doctors of the Church have declared that they learned more in prayer at the foot of the cucifix or near the tabernacle than in the most learned works. Books give the letter and explain it; intimate prayer obtains the spirit which vivifies, the interior light which sometimes illuminates in an instant principles often repeated, but whose universal radiation had not been grasped. Many things in Christian life are illuminated, for example, in the light of St. Paul's words: "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" e This principle is the basis of humility, gratitude, and true love of God, that we may respond to God's love for us. In the same way we then increasingly understand the profound meaning of these words: God is the Author of being, of life, the Author of salvation, of grace, of final perseverance.

Such is, though very imperfectly expressed, the knowledge of God which proficients need and which is found in the illuminative

• See I Cor. 4:7.

way. This period, in which the soul begins to contemplate God in the spiritual mirror of the mysteries of salvation, already surpasses the ascetical life; it is a beginning of the mystical life. A denial of this fact would be a failure to recognize the grace of God. It would likewise be a failure to recognize it if one should deny the mystical character of *The Imitation* in which all interior souls may find their nourishment. This mystical character is a sign that the infused contemplation of the mysteries, which is discussed in this book, is in the normal way of sanctity.

The Love of God and of Souls in Proficients

What is the normal effect of the interior lights received on the mysteries of the life and death of our Savior, on that of eternal life which is promised us? These lights lead the soul to love God, no longer as in the preceding period, only by fleeing mortal sin and deliberate venial sin, but by imitating the virtues of Christ, His humility, meekness, patience, by observing not only the precepts necessary for all, but the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, obedience, or at least the spirit of these counsels, and by avoiding imperfections.

Then with a greater abundance of interior light, the faithful soul will receive, at least occasionally, keen desires for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Then that hunger and thirst after the justice of God which Christ speaks of in the beatitudes will grow. The soul will see the truth of His words: "If any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink. . . . Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The soul will then receive, at least for a time, a greater facility for prayer. Not infrequently there is at this stage the infused prayer of quiet in which the will is captivated for a very short time by the attraction of God.[7] Persons dedicated to the apostolate have also in this period a greater facility to act in the service of God, to teach, direct, and organize works.

In such a life the soul loves God, no longer only "with its whole heart" in the midst of sensible consolations, but "with all its soul," with all its activities, not yet however "with all its strength," as will happen in the night of the spirit, nor as yet "with all its mind," for the soul is not yet established in this superior region. That it may

[7] St. Teresa, *The Interior Castle,* fourth mansion.

be established there, the passive purification of the higher part of the soul will be needed, a purification that brings about the disappearance of all the spiritual or intellectual pride which still mingles in the facility for prayer and action, which we have just mentioned. The soul has still a long road to travel, like Elias who had to walk forty days and forty nights even to Mt. Horeb; but the soul grows, its virtues develop and become solid virtues, the expression of a love of God and souls, which is not only affective, but effective or efficacious.

We shall now discuss these Christian virtues, their relation especially to the love of God, as do the apostle St. John, St. Paul, and all spiritual writers after them. For this reason we shall insist on the moral virtues that have a closer relation to the theological virtues: those of humility, meekness, and patience; those that correspond to the counsels of poverty, chastity, obedience; also those pointed out by Christ when He .speaks of the necessity of uniting the prudence of the serpent to the simplicity of the dove, or to perfect sincerity. We shall thus be led to speak of what the progress of the theological virtues and of the gifts of the Holy Ghost should be in the illuminative way under the direction of the interior Master. Thus we follow an ascending way toward union with God.[8]

• In IIa IIae of the *Summa,* St. Thomas follows a descending way, speaking first of the theological virtues and of the gifts which accompany them, then of the moral virtues, descending from prudence to justice, fortitude, and temperance. St. Thomas proceeds thus in a speculative manner and according to the order of intention, in which the end is willed before the means.

We shall follow the inverse way, according to the order of execution or of realization, which rises toward the obtaining of the end desired. We consider things here in a more practical and concrete manner according to the progress of the proficient toward divine union.

CHAPTER VII

The Spiritual Edifice in Proficients

TO describe what the progress of the Christian virtues should be in the illuminative way, we must recall the profound meaning of the traditional symbolism in the figure of the spiritual edifice. In this figure we find many of the teachings of Christ and St. Paul, such as St. Augustine and St. Thomas understood them in their works where they speak of the subordination of the virtues and of their connection with the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Christ is the first to tell us, at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, that we must build our spiritual edifice not on sand, but on a rock, and St. Paul adds that the rock is Christ Himself on whom everything must rest.

To build this temple we must, therefore, dig the foundation until we find the rock. According to St. Augustine, the excavation symbolizes humility, which is, says St. Thomas, a fundamental virtue, inasmuch as it removes pride, the source of every sin. If the soul is empty of self, it will be filled with God; if it does not seek itself, it will seek God in everything. To build this temple we must, therefore, not scratch the soil, but dig very deep; and if we allow the Lord to work, He Himself will dig by making us profit by the humiliations He sends us.

As the drawing on the opposite page shows, from humility, the base of this excavation resting on Christ the foundation rock, rises the first column of the edifice, the pillar of faith, as St. Paul calls it. Faith is called a fundamental virtue, not only like humility in that it removes an obstacle, but in that all the other infused virtues rest positively on it.[1] Opposite the pillar of faith is that of hope, which makes us desire God, eternal life, relying on the divine help for its attainment.

1 Cf. *Sumrna,* la Ilae, q. 161, «.J.

CHARITY

These two pillars support the cupola of charity, the highest of the virtues. The part of the cupola which rises toward heaven symbolizes charity toward God, whereas that which slopes toward the earth is a figure of fraternal charity, which makes us love our neighbor for God because he is a child of God or called to become one. The cupola is surmounted by the cross to remind us that our love ascends toward God only through Christ and the merits of His passion.

St. Augustine, speaking of the beatitudes in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, and St. Thomas tell us that to each of the three theological virtues corresponds a gift of the Holy Ghost; these three gifts are symbolized by three lamps. From the pillar of faith is suspended the lamp of the gift of understanding, which renders faith penetrating. By faith we adhere to the word of God; by the special inspiration of the gift of understanding we penetrate it, as for example, when assailed by temptation, we comprehend that God is truly our last end, the one thing necessary, and that we must remain faithful to Him.

From the pillar of hope is suspended the lamp of the gift of knowledge, which, according to St. Augustine and St. Thomas, makes us know things, not by their supreme cause as wisdom does, but by their proximate, defectible, and often deficient cause. For this reason, according to these doctors, the gift of knowledge shows us the emptiness of earthly things and the vanity of human helps in attaining a divine end. In this sense, the gift, which perfects faith, also perfects hope and leads us to aspire more strongly toward eternal life and to rely on the help of God, the formal motive of hope, to attain it.[2]

From the cupola symbolizing charity is suspended another lamp, the gift of wisdom, which illuminates the whole interior of the spiritual edifice and makes us see all things as coming from God, supreme Cause and last End, from His love or at least by His permission for a greater good which we shall some day see and which from time to time becomes visible here on earth. In this spiritual temple, says St. Paul, dwells the Holy Ghost and with Him the Father and the Son. They are there as in a mansion, where They may be

1 St. Thomas shows especially that the gift of knowledge perfects faith; but he points out that it consequently strengthens hope. This virtue is also assisted by the gift of fear, inasmuch as it preserves the soul from presumption.

and are from time to time quasi-experientally known and loved.

However, to enter this spiritual edifice there must be a door. According to tradition, in particular the teaching of St. Gregory the Great, often quoted by St. Thomas, the four hinges of this two-leafed door symbolize the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. Their name "cardinal" comes from the Latin *cardines,* meaning hinges. This meaning is preserved in the current expression, "That man is unhinged," when irritation makes a man fail in these four virtues. Without them man is outside the spiritual temple in the uncultivated region ravaged by the evil weeds of egoism and inordinate inclinations.[3] The two upper hinges on the temple door symbolize prudence and justice, which are in the higher part of the soul, and the two lower hinges are figures of fortitude and temperance, which have their seat in the sensible appetites, common alike to man and animal.

To each of these four hinges is fastened a triple piece of ironwork, symbolizing the principal virtues annexed to each of the cardinal virtues. Thus, to prudence is attached foresight (a reflection of divine Providence), circumspection attentive to the circumstances in the midst of which we must act, and steadfastness or constancy, that we may not because of difficulties abandon good decisions and resolutions made after mature reflection in the presence of God. Inconstancy, says St. Thomas, is a form of imprudence.[4]

To the virtue of justice are also attached several virtues. Those which relate to God as forms of justice toward Him are: religion, which renders to Him the worship due Him; penance, which offers Him reparation for the offenses committed against Him; obedience, which makes man obey the divine commandments or the orders of the spiritual or temporal representatives of God.

The virtue of fortitude makes us keep to the right road in the presence of great dangers instead of yielding to fear; it manifests itself in the soldier who dies for his country and in the martyr who dies for the faith. To fortitude several virtues are also attached: notably, patience that we may endure daily vexations without weakening; magnanimity which tends to great things to be accomplished without becoming discouraged in the face of difficulties; longanimity which makes us bear over a long period of time incessant

[3] Cf. la Ilae, q.61, a. 3.
[4] See Ila Ilae, q.53, a.y.

contradictions that sometimes are renewed daily for many years.

Lastly, to the virtue of temperance, which moderates the inordinate impulses of our sensible appetites, are attached chastity, virginity, meekness which moderates and represses irritation or anger, and evangelical poverty which makes us use the things of the world as though not using them, without becoming attached to them.

According to St. Augustine and St. Thomas, to each of these cardinal virtues corresponds a gift of the Holy Ghost, symbolized by so many precious stones which ornament the door; *portae nitent margaritis,* as we read in the hymn for the feast of the dedication of a church.

To prudence corresponds manifestly the gift of counsel, which enlightens us when even infused prudence would remain uncertain, for example, as to how to answer an indiscreet question without telling a lie. To justice, which in regard to God is called the virtue of religion, corresponds the gift of piety, which comes to our help in prolonged aridities by inspiring in us a filial affection for God. To the virtue of fortitude corresponds the gift of fortitude, so manifest in the martyrs. To the virtue of temperance, and especially of chastity, corresponds the gift of filial fear, which enables us to surmount the temptations of the flesh, according to the words of the Psalmist: "Pierce Thou my flesh with Thy fear."

Thus the picture of the spiritual edifice condenses the teaching of the Gospel, the writings of St. Paul and of the great doctors on the subordination of the virtues and their connection with the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

This structure may appear somewhat complicated when insistence is placed on the virtues attached to the cardinal virtues; but the superior simplicity of the things of God stands out if the following profound statement is considered carefully: When in a soul or a community the foundation of the edifice and its summit are what they ought to be, in other words, when there is profound humility and true fraternal charity, the great sign of the progress of the love of God, then everything goes well. Why is this? Because God then supplies by His gifts for what may be lacking in acquired prudence or natural energy; and He constantly reminds souls of their duties, giving them His grace to accomplish them. "God . . . giveth grace to the humble," and He never fails those who understand the precept of love: "Love one another as I have loved you; by this shall all men know that you are My disciples."

CHAPTER VIII

Prudence and the Interior Life

"Be ye therefore wise as serpents and simple as doves."
Matt, io: 16

WE shall discuss the moral virtues in the service of charity and in their relation to the interior life, showing how they ought to grow in the illuminative way and what their true place is in the spiritual edifice.

Whereas the theological virtues are concerned with the last end and lead us to believe in God, to hope in Him, to love Him above all, the moral virtues have to do with the means to be employed in order to obtain the last end. Among them we distinguish four, called the cardinal virtues, because they are, as we have seen, like the four hinges *(cardines)* of the door which gives access to the temple of rhe interior life. The two principal walls of this temple symbolize faith and hope, the dome is the symbol of charity, and the foundation is humility. The four cardinal virtues, to which are attached the other moral virtues, are, as moralists, even those of pagan antiquity, commonly teach: prudence, which directs the others; justice, which renders to each man his due; fortitude or courage, which keeps us from letting ourselves be cast down in an unreasonable manner in the face of danger; temperance, which causes the light of reason to descend into our sensibility especially under the forms of sobriety and of chastity. Other moral virtues, as we have said, such as patience and meekness, are manifestly attached to the cardinal virtues and are called connected virtues.

To understand clearly the teaching of St. Thomas on the most important of these virtues, we should recall that he admits a difference not only of degree, but of nature, in other words, a specific

difference between the acquired moral virtues which were described by the pagan philosophers, and the infused moral virtues, which are received in baptism and grow in us with charity. It is of these virtues that the Gospel speaks.[1]

The difference separating these two orders of moral virtues is most profound; it is that which distinguishes the natural, or rational, order from that of grace. Here we have at the same time a different formal object, motive, and end.

The acquired moral virtues, which were well described by Aristotle, establish the rectitude of right reason in the will and sensibility. Under the direction of acquired prudence, justice gradually reigns in the will; rational fortitude and reasonable moderation prevail in the sensible appetites.

The infused moral virtues, received in baptism, belong to a much higher order; they have not only a rational but a supernatural formal motive. Under the direction of infused faith, prudence and the Christian moral virtues cause the light of grace, or the divine rule of the children of God, to descend into the will and the sensible appetites.

Between the acquired prudence described by Aristotle and the infused prudence received in baptism, there is a measureless distance, far greater than that of an octave, which in music separates two notes of the same name at the two extremities of a complete scale. Thus a distinction is commonly made between the philosophical temperance of a Socrates and Christian temperance, or the philosophical poverty of a Crates and evangelical poverty, or again the rational measure to be observed in the passions and Christian mortification. For example, by itself acquired temperance directed by reason alone does not take into consideration the mysteries of faith, our elevation to the supernatural life, original sin, the infinite gravity of mortal sin as an offense against God, the value of charity or the divine friendship. Neither does it consider the elevation of our supernatural end: "To be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect," with a perfection of the same order as His, although unequal to His.

Infused temperance, on the contrary, which is directed by divine faith and Christian prudence, takes positively into account all these revealed mysteries; it is ordained to make us, not only truly reason-

[1] St. Thomas, la Ilae, q.63, a.4.

able beings, but to give us the supernaturalized sensible appetites of a child of God.

Thus we see that these two virtues which bear the same name of temperance are of very different metal: one is silver, the other gold. In spite of the measureless distance separating them, the infused virtue and the acquired virtue of the same name are exercised together in the Christian in the state of grace, somewhat like the art of the pianist, which is in his intellect, and the agility of his fingers which gives to his art an extrinsic facility.

Thus the acquired virtue should, in the Christian, be at the service of the infused virtue of the same name, just as the imagination and the memory of a learned man concur in the work of his intellect. Thereby the moral virtues are also at the service of charity, the highest of the infused virtues. We shall discuss the chief among these virtues, and first of all prudence.

Christ spoke of prudence on several different occasions in the Gospel, particularly when He said to the apostles: "I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents and simple, as doves." [2] Later on He also says: "Who, thinkest thou, is a faithful and wise servant? . . . Blessed is that servant. . . . Amen I say to you, he shall place him over all his goods." [3]

Prudence, which is requisite for every man that he may conduct himself well, is especially fitting for those who must counsel and direct others. We must have a correct idea of this virtue if we are not to confound it with defects which sometimes resemble it, and if we are to distinguish clearly between acquired prudence, good as it is in its own order, and infused prudence. For this reason we shall first discuss defects to be avoided, then acquired prudence, and finally infused prudence and the gift of counsel, which often comes to the aid of the virtue in difficult cases.

Defects to Be Avoided

The value of the virtue is better seen by considering the disadvantages of the contrary defects, which are often quite manifest. Therefore Scripture, the more strongly to recommend prudence to us, shows us the dangers and the results of lack of consideration.

[2] Matt, to: 16.
[3] Matt. 24:45-47.

It contrasts for us the prudent and the foolish virgins.[4] St. Peter and St. Paul praise the prudence of the aged, especially of those who are charged with watching over the first Christian communities,[6] adding: "Be not wise in your own conceits,"[6] and declaring that God "will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent," [7] who rely chiefly on their suavity. And Christ says: "I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things [the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven] from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones." [8]

Consequently there are two mutually contradictory defects to be avoided: on the one hand, imprudence, lack of consideration, negligence in considering what one should, rash haste in judgment; and on the other hand, false prudence, or "the wisdom of the flesh," often called slyness or even cunning, which pursues only a lower, quite earthly end. It seeks, not the honest good, the object of virtue, but the useful good such as money, and it displays much craft or trickery to procure this good for itself. Cunning is the cleverness of rogues; it will not help them to enter the kingdom of heaven. This false prudence is foolishness and a delusion, as St. Paul often says.[10]

Imprudence, or lack of consideration, greatly retards spiritual progress, and often it retards it by trying to hasten it. This is the case with those who skim the road, who wish to reach divine union immediately without passing humbly through the indispensable lower degrees, as if a bird were to try to fly before having wings, or an architect to construct the spires of a church before laying its foundations. For example, these imprudent souls read mystical books too soon and too rapidly, with avidity and in a superficial way, without applying themselves to the serious practice of virtue. They examine superficially the most beautiful aspects of the spiritual life and will perhaps never nourish their souls with them. It is as if they gathered from a fruit tree the flowers which should give the fruit, unaware that by so doing they hinder the fruit from forming. Later, when they should read the great spiritual writers with profit, they

[4] Matt. 25:4.
[6] Cf. I Tim. 3:2; I Pet. 4:7.
[6] Rom. 12:16.
[7] See I Cor. 1:19.
[8] Matt. 11:25.
[6] Rom. 8:6: "For the wisdom of the flesh is death . . . an enemy to God."
[10] Cf. I Cor. 3:19: "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."

will perhaps say that it is useless to do so since they have already read them and know them; when as a matter of fact they have only a lamentably superficial knowledge of them. Theirs is the imprudence of the foolish virgins, the lack of discretion in the spiritual life.

To avoid the mutually contradictory defects of imprudence and false prudence, it is important to consider what infused or Christian prudence should be and likewise what should characterize acquired prudence, which is at the service of infused prudence, as the imagination and memory are at the service of the intellect. To follow an ascending course, we shall first discuss acquired prudence, then infused prudence, and finally the gift of counsel.

Acquired Prudence and Self-control

Acquired prudence, which has for its object honest good, is a true virtue distinct from false prudence, or the wisdom of the flesh, which St. Paul speaks of. Acquired prudence is defined as *recta ratio agibilium,* right reason which directs our acts. It is called *auriga virtutum,* the driver of the moral virtues; in reality, it directs the acts of justice, fortitude, temperance, and the annexed virtues.[11] It determines the measure to be observed or the rational happy mean, which is also a summit, in the midst of and above every deviation

[11] Cf. A. Gardeil, O.P., *La vraie vie chrétienne* (1935, 2nd part, I: pp. 99-206), "Personal and supernatural self-control," pp. njff.: "The ancient philosophers compared prudence to the noble driver of a quadriga: *auriga virtutum.* With his gaze fixed on the road that he is to cover, the driver holds his coursers well in hand. He has an eye for everything, the unevenness of the road, the progress of his rivals, the slightest movements of his steeds, the special character of each of which he knows thoroughly. This one rears, that one shies, the other one kicks in the shafts. In the meantime he handles the reins, and with his voice, and if necessary with the whip, he moderates, regularizes, excites them, employing all his energies to meet the situation, knowing how to change his driving in the course of the race and, so to speak, shaping his interventions in accordance with the spirit of his team. We must transpose this manner of acting into the domain of supernatural conduct ... ; and this by living experience and vigor of decision unceasingly renewed and nourished at the springs of the living love of God."

Thus the just man must direct and rule the movements of the sensible appetites; in like manner the director of works, his subordinates; the superior, his subjects; the bishop, his diocese; the supreme pastor, the entire Church.

Thereby we see the elevation of the virtue of prudence, which is below the theological virtues, but above even the virtue of religion, whose acts it directs, like those of justice, fortitude, and temperance, which are like the coursers of the chariot.

that may be unreasonable through defect or excess. Thus prudence determines the happy mean of fortitude above cowardliness and temerity, which would lead us to expose our life without a reasonable motive. Aristotle spoke of *mesotes* (the happy mean) and *acrotes* (the summit).[12]

The virtue of acquired prudence, which was well described by Aristotle, proceeds under the light of natural reason and moral knowledge, making this rational light descend into our sensibility, our will, and all our activity. But to determine the reasonable happy mean in the different moral virtues, prudence presupposes these virtues, as the coachman needs well-broken horses.[13] There is a mutual relationship between the directing virtue and the others; they grow together. Let us not forget that no one can have true acquired prudence, distinct from cunning and artifice, if he has not in a proportionate degree justice, fortitude, temperance, loyalty, and true modesty. Why is this? Because, as the ancients used to say: "Such as a man is, such does the end seem to him." [14] The ambitious man judges as good what flatters his pride, whereas the sincerely modest man loves to do good while remaining hidden. He who is dominated by ambition may have great cunning and subtlety; he cannot have true acquired prudence, nor, with even greater reason, infused prudence. Therefore St. Thomas says: "The truth of the practical intellect depends on conformity with a right appetite." [15] Moreover, prudence ought not only to judge well, but to command efficaciously the virtuous acts of justice, fortitude, and temperance, and it cannot command them in this way unless the will is upright and efficacious, rectified by these very virtues.[16] Thus there is truly a mutual relationship between prudence and the moral virtues which it directs; true acquired prudence cannot exist without the acquired virtues of justice, fortitude, and temperance. This

12 Cf. *Ethica,* Bk. II, chap. 2; St. Thomas, la Ilae, q.64, a. 1.

13 Cf. la Ilae, q.58, a. 5.

14 *Ethica,* Bk. Ill, chap. 4.

15 See la Ilae, q.57, a. 5 ad jum. Even if the prudent judgment is speculatively false because of an absolutely involuntary error, it remains practically true. Thus if we cannot know that the beverage presented to us is poisoned, it is not imprudent to judge that we may drink it.

16 The principal act of prudence is indeed the *imperium,* or command, which directs the execution of die virtuous act that must be placed here and now. Cf. Ila Ilae, q.47, a. 8.

rectitude of moral conduct is in itself something very beautiful.[17]

Consequently, in a man in the state of mortal sin, who sins seriously against justice, fortitude, temperance, or any other virtue, the virtue of acquired prudence can be only in the state of a slightly stable disposition *(facile mobilis),* for the will of this man is turned away from his last end.[18] That the acquired virtue of prudence exist in the state of a stable virtue *(difficile mobilis)* and be in truth firmly connected with the other moral virtues, we must have charity; we must efficaciously love God, our last end, more than ourselves.[18]

Acquired prudence counsels us about many things which natural reason can know by its own power. It will preserve us from impulsiveness, dominate our temperament, tell us not to follow the fancies of our imagination, the whims of our sensible appetites. It will remind us that we must submit to the judgment of those who are more enlightened and experienced, that we must obey those

17 This truth may be more clearly seen if one observes that the politics of states rarely rise above the economic or material interests of the people, above the tangible, *useful good;* they give little consideration to the rules of true morality or the *honest good,* the object of virtue. Then morality disappears in the relations of nations; states sometimes permit enormous collective crimes which they could and should hinder by defending the oppressed and the persecuted. Thereafter the nation must bear the punishment or the terrible results of these unpardonable imprudences and cowardly acts, which negate the moral law and right in order to maintain the primacy of power or of gold. To compensate for these faults there must be an intense interior life in certain souls who may be "the ten just" of whom the Scriptures speak and because of whom God shows mercy.

18 Because of mortal sin, the will is turned directly away from the supernatural last end, and indirectly from the natural last end, for the natural law itself obliges us to obey God, no matter what He may command. Thus every sin against the supernatural last end is indirectly a sin against the natural law.

18 Cf. la Ilae, q.63, a. 2 ad zum: "Mortal sin is incompatible with divinely infused virtue, especially if this be considered in its perfect state. But actual sin, even mortal, is compatible with humanly acquired virtue; because the use of a habit in us is subject to our will (q.49, a.3) . . . ; and one sinful act does not destroy a habit of acquired virtue." *Ibid.,* q.65, a. 2: "It is possible by means of human works to acquire moral virtues, >n so far as they produce good works that are directed to an end not surpassing the natural power of man; and when they are acquired thus, they can be without charity, even as they were in many of the Gentiles." *Ibid.,* ad mm: "Virtue, in the words quoted, denotes imperfect virtue." On these texts consult the commentary of tne *Sabnanticences* and what we said in Part One of this work on the connection of the virtues.

who have authority to command. It will guide us in our dealings with different people by taking their temperament and character into consideration. But however perfect acquired prudence may be, since it belongs to the natural or rational order, it cannot by itself judge as it should the supernatural conduct to be observed in Christian life. For that judgment, we need infused prudence, which is that recommended by the Gospel.

Infused Prudence

Infused prudence was given to us by baptism; it grows with charity, through merit, the sacraments, Communion. By itself it gives us an intrinsic facility to judge well and practically of the matters of Christian life, and its exercise is extrinsically facilitated by acquired prudence which is exercised at the same time. Infused prudence brings to the actions of our daily life the light of grace and of infused faith, as acquired prudence brings to them the light of right reason. In certain very sensible Christians, acquired prudence is especially prominent; in others, who are more supernatural, infused prudence is particularly manifest. Consequently, infused prudence is a great virtue, superior to all the moral virtues which it directs; it should evidently be found especially in those whose duty is to advise and direct others.

We are not concerned here, therefore, with that negative prudence which, to avoid difficulties and vexations, almost always advises against acting, against undertaking great things. This prudence, which has as its principle: "Undertake nothing," is that of cowardly souls. After saying: "The best is sometimes the enemy of the good," it ends by declaring: "The best is often the enemy of the good." Such negative prudence confounds the mediocre with the happy mean of the moral virtue, which is also a summit above contrary vices. Mediocrity itself is an unstable mean between good and evil; it is that with which tepidity contents itself, seeking always for pardon by speaking of moderation and stating its first principle: "Nothing must be exaggerated." Then follows forgetfulness of the fact that in the way of God, not to advance is to retrogress; not to ascend is to descend; for the law of the traveler is to advance, and not to fall asleep on the road. True Christian prudence is not a negative but a positive virtue, which leads a man to act as he should

when he should, and which never loses sight of the elevation of our supernatural last end, nor of zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. It definitively rejects certain human maxims.

If acquired prudence presupposes the acquired moral virtues, Christian prudence presupposes the infused moral virtues which accompany charity. And if, in the first training, more insistence is placed on these virtues, especially on humility, chastity, and patience, than on prudence itself, it is because the humble, chaste, and patient man is inclined by these very virtues to judge well and practically *(per modum inclinationis')* of what relates to moral and spiritual life.

But when the Christian, who is already more or less trained, must begin to direct himself, he should in many things, especially if he must counsel others, be particularly attentive to what true supernatural prudence demands, and avoid all lack of consideration and rash haste in judgment. Then he will become increasingly aware of the superiority of true Christian prudence, a virtue which ranks immediately below the theological virtues, that it may cause their radiation and vivifying influence to descend on the moral virtues which it directs.

Therefore Christian prudence should grow with charity, and its supernatural views should increasingly prevail over the too human views of what St. Thomas, following the example of St. Augustine, calls the "lower reason." The lower reason judges everything from the temporal point of view; the higher reason, from the point of view of eternity.[20]

This lofty Christian prudence is exceedingly rare. Father Lallemant, S.J., even says: "The majority of religious, even of the good and virtuous, follow in their own conduct and in their direction of others only reason and common sense, in which some of them excel. This rule is good, but it does not suffice to attain Christian perfection. Such persons are ordinarily guided in their conduct by the common opinion of those with whom they live, and as the latter are imperfect, although their lives may not be dissolute, because the number of the perfect is very small, they never reach the sublime ways of the spirit. They live like the common run of people, and

[20]Cf. Ia, q.79, a.9: "The higher reason is that which is intent on the contemplation and consultation of things eternal; . . . the lower reason is that which is intent on the disposal of temporal things." This is what St. Augustine says in *De Trin.,* Bk. XII, chap. 7.

their manner of directing others is imperfect." [21] At certain times, for instance during persecutions, the inadequacy of such a way of acting becomes evident.

True prudence never loses sight of the elevation of the end toward which we should journey; it judges all our acts in relation to eternal life, and not only in relation to the customs or conventions of our environment. It repeatedly calls to mind "the one thing necessary." Aided by the special inspirations of the gift of counsel,[22] it becomes holy discretion which weighs all things according to God's measure.

Holy Discretion and the Gift of Counsel

St. Catherine of Siena offers an admirable treatise on discretion or spiritual discernment in her *Dialogue.* She tells us that Christian discretion, which indicates the measure between the contrary defects and is the source of a wise discernment, is based on the knowledge of God and of self. She states: "Discretion is the only child of self-knowledge and, wedding with charity, has indeed many other descendants, as a tree with many branches; but that which gives life to the tree, to its branches, and its fruit, is the ground of humility, in which it is planted, which humility is the foster-mother and nurse of charity, by whose means this tree remains in the perpetual calm of discretion." [23] This is a symbolical manner of expressing the connection of these virtues.

Holy discretion presupposes, therefore, a great spirit of faith. It lessens nothing; whereas practical naturalism sees only a limited aspect of great things, holy discretion sees the great aspect even of the little things in Christian life, of our daily duties in their relation to God.[24]* It directs justice, which renders to God and to one's neighbor what is due them. As we read in *The Dialogue* (it is the Lord who speaks):

> Discretion . . . renders to each one his due. Chiefly to Me in rendering praise and glory to My name, and in referring to Me the graces

[21] *La Doctrine spirituelle,* 4th principle, chap. 2, a. 2. We have already quoted this passage, but there is no harm in quoting it a second time.

[22] Cf. St. Thomas, *De dono consilii,* IIa IIae, q.52.

[23] *The Dialogue,* chap. 9.

[24] Luke 16:10: "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater."

and the gifts which she sees and knows she has received from Me;[28] and rendering to herself that which she sees herself to have merited, knowing that she does not even exist of herself. . . . And she seems to herself to be ungrateful for so many benefits, and negligent, in that she has not made the most of her time, and the graces she has received, and so seems to herself worthy of suffering; wherefore she becomes odious and displeasing to herself through her guilt.[2]' And this founds the virtue of discretion on knowledge of self, that is, on true humility, for, were this humility not in the soul, the soul would be indiscreet; indiscretion being founded on pride, as discretion is on humility.

An indiscreet soul robs Me of the honor due to Me, and attributes it to herself through vainglory, and that which is really her own she imputes to Me, grieving and murmuring concerning My mysteries, with which I work in her soul and those of My other creatures; wherefore everything in Me and in her neighbor is cause of scandal to her. Contrariwise those who possess the virtue of discretion. For when they have rendered what is due to Me and to themselves, they proceed to render to their neighbor their principal debt of love and of humble and continuous prayer, which all should pay to each other and further, the debt of doctrine, and example of a holy and honorable life, counseling and helping others according to their needs for salvation.[22]

Holy discretion is thus the light which rules the virtues; it measures the acts of exterior penance and those of devotion to our neighbor, at the same time reminding us that our love of God should be without measure and should always grow here on earth.[2*]

Far from being a negative virtue, holy discretion is, in the service of charity, the virtue which holds the reins of the moral life, directing justice, fortitude, and temperance, that we may persevere in

[28] These acts are, in truth, acts of the virtue of religion, directed by prudence. Prudence does not, however, direct the acts of the theological virtues which are superior to it, but it points out when it is suitable, for example, to speak of matters of faith with given persons, and when it is fitting to perform a given act of charity. The theological virtues, which have God Himself for their immediate rule, do not consist in a happy mean determined by prudence, but their exercise is not independent of it. (Cf. la llae, q. 64, a. 4.)

[28] A sincere Christian, who was strolling through a large cemetery, saw on almost every tomb a eulogy of the deceased. He felt himself inspired to ask that the following inscription be placed on his tomb: "Here lies a great sinner, who, if he is saved, owes it to the great mercy of God." He began to glimpse what is from ourselves and what is from God in our lives. "Destruction is thy own, O Israel: thy help is only in Me" (Osee 13:9).

[*] *The Dialogue,* chap. 9.

[21] *Ibid.,* chap. 11.

good, that we may make God known and loved. Christian prudence thus preserves with charity the connection of all the virtues.

When this great Christian prudence is enlightened by the special inspirations of the gift of counsel, which corresponds to it, it is, as our Lord insists it should be, in accordance with "the simplicity of the dove," with perfect uprightness—not at all naïveté—which keeps silence about what must not be said, but never speaks against the truth. A man must be master of his tongue and know how to cultivate his character.

The gift of counsel comes to the assistance of prudence especially in difficult and unforeseen circumstances, sometimes to unite in one and the same word or gesture seemingly contradictory virtues, as firmness and meekness, or again veracity and fidelity in keeping a secret.

According to St. Augustine and St. Thomas,[28] the gift of counsel corresponds to the beatitude of the merciful for two reasons: first of all, mercy is necessary for us to know how to give fitting salutary counsel to those who need it, counsel which truly carries, which docs not rebuff souls but lifts them up again with strength and sweetness. In the second place, when prudence hesitates in difficult circumstances between the rigor of justice to be observed and mercy, which should not be forgotten, the gift of counsel generally inclines us toward mercy which will encourage the sinner and perhaps make him re-enter the order of justice. He will at times enter it with a sincere and profound contrition, thus repairing the order that he violated, far better than by bearing the punishment with less love. Consequently the loftiness of infused prudence is manifest; but we shall see it even more clearly in our discussion of Christian simplicity, which should always be united to prudence.

Even now we grasp the importance of Christ's words: "Who, thinkest thou, is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath appointed over his family, to give them meat in season? Blessed is that servant, whom when his lord shall come he shall find so doing. Amen I say to you, he shall place him over all his goods." [30] These words are applied to every faithful and prudent Christian, especially to those who must advise others, to heads of families, to pastors, to bishops, to great popes. They will receive a high reward, to which

28 Cf. Ila Ilae, q.52, a.4.
•"Matt. 24:45-47.

allusion is made in Ecclesiasticus,[81][82] where we read the praise of the wisdom and prudence of the patriarchs, and in the prophecy of Daniel where it is said: "But they that are learned [in the wisdom of God and faithful to His law] shall shine as the brightness of the firmament: and they that instruct many to justice, as stars for all eternity."[82] Let us remember that false prudence is tin, true acquired prudence is silver, infused prudence is gold, and the inspirations of the gift of counsel are diamonds, of the same order as the divine light. "He that followeth Me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life."[88]

[81] Ecclus. 34:1-16.
[82] Dan. 12:3.
[88] John 8:12.

CHAPTER IX

The Different Forms of Justice and the Education of the Will

> "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice."
>
> Matt. 5:6

AMONG the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, there is one, namely justice, which pious people do not consider sufficiently. They are attentive to the different forms of temperance, to prudence to be observed in the general conduct of life; they try to practice charity toward their neighbor, but they sometimes neglect certain duties of justice and consideration for the rights of others. Those, for example, who persecuted St. John of the Cross called themselves men of prayer and austerity, yet they were most unjust toward the reformer of Carmel.

If man practiced the different forms of justice more perfectly, he would make great progress in training his will. Justice, in fact, is in that faculty to make it leave egoism or self-love,[1] as prudence is in the intellect to oppose lack of consideration, and as fortitude and temperance are in the sensible appetites to strengthen them against fear and inordinate concupiscences.[2] For this reason these four virtues are called cardinal virtues. They are like hinges on which the doors turn that give access to the moral life.[3]

Some souls, while given to anger, are so cowardly that they seem to have lost all will; indeed this faculty seems to have disappeared, leaving only self-love or egoism. The reason is that the will is considerably weakened when it is deprived of the acquired and in-

[1] Cf. la Ilae, q.56, a.6, c. and ad jum.
[2] Aid., a. 4.
[3] *Ibid.,* q.6j, a.i–j.

fused virtues which should be in it. On the other hand, a will enriched by these virtues is increased more than tenfold.

We should remember that the four forms of justice, which we are going to discuss, should be in the will and, above them, the virtues of religion, hope, and charity. Thus the training or Christian education of the will and character should be made. Character should be the authentic imprint of reason illumined by faith and of moral energy, a mark stamped on the physical temperament, whether nervous, irascible, lymphatic, or sanguine, hyperthyroid or hypothyroid, in order that this temperament may cease to dominate, and that the Christian may truly appear as a rational being and still more as a child of God.

Consequently, for this Christian education of the will, we shall discuss the different forms of justice, to which correspond several precepts of the Decalogue. After our duties toward God, they determine those we should practice toward our parents and toward all persons with whom we have relations: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods. Thou shalt not bear false witness," and so on.[4] We may transgress these precepts in many different ways when we forget in practice that we should not do to others what we do not wish them to do to us.

People often think of justice only in the inferior form known as commutative justice, which governs exchanges and forbids theft, fraud, calumny, and so forth. They do not sufficiently consider distributive justice,[5] which presides over the distribution by authority of the advantages and duties of social life among the different members of society. In view of the common good, it distributes to each as it should goods, work, duties, obligations, rewards, and penalties; this distribution should be made in proportion to merit, real needs, and the importance of the different members of society. Even more do people forget a higher form of justice, which aims immediately at the common good of society and brings about the establishment and observance of just laws and ordinances; this form of justice is called legal justice.[6] Above it there is equity, which considers not only the letter but the spirit of laws, and that not only of civil laws, but of all those that govern Christian conduct.[7]

[4] Cf. Deut. 5:20 f.

[5] Cf. IIa IIae, q.61, a. 1 f.

[6] *Ibid.,* q.58, a.6 f.; q.60, a. 1 ad 4um; q.81, a.8 ad mm.

[7] *Ibid.,* q.80, a. 1 ad 1um, ad 3um; q. 120, a. 1 f.. Of "Epikeia" or Equity.

The interior life should watch over the exercise of these virtues. Here also the acquired virtue of justice is at the service of the infused virtue of the same name, somewhat as the imagination is at the service of reason.8

Commutative and Distributive Justice in Relation to the Interior Life

The duties of justice appear in a living and concrete fashion when we think of faults against it which should be avoided, for the sorrow that injustice causes us reveals to us the value of justice. The faults and acts contrary to commutative justice are not only homicide, theft, fraud, usury, false accusations and false witness in a lawsuit; they are also insults given in anger, affronts, unjust blame or reproaches against inferiors, equals, and superiors. Also included are defamation, slander, or speaking ill of another without a proportionate motive; also secret insinuation by whispering, mockery which lessens the esteem due to our neighbor,8 forgetfulness of the truth that our neighbor has a right to his reputation and that he needs it to do good, to such an extent, says St. Thomas, that the perfect should, not for their own sakes, but for the good to be done to others, resist their detractors.10

When commutative justice has been violated in one or another of these ways, restitution or reparation becomes a duty. Thus we must repair the wrong that we have done our neighbor by slander or insinuations or mockery which show we do not regard him as he deserves.11 Besides it is cowardly to ridicule someone who cannot defend himself, or the absent who cannot reply.

• Cf. la Ilae, q. 100, a. 12: "Justice, like the other virtues, may denote either the acquired or the infused virtue, as is clear from what has been stated (q.63, a.4). The acquired virtue is caused by works; but the infused virtue is caused by God Himself through His grace." Acquired justice and its different kinds which we have just named were admirably defined by Aristotle, who even determined in regard to the happy mean the difference between the *medium rationis* and the *medium rei* which is determined according to equality in commutative justice and according to proportionality in distributive justice (cf. *Ethica,* Bk. V, chap. 3; St. Thomas, Ila Ilae, q.61, a.2). But evidently Aristotle did not speak of infused justice, which is illumined by die supernatural light of faith and of infused prudence.

•Cf. Ila Ilae, q.73-75: Of backbiting, tale-bearing, derision.

10/Z>»d., q.72, a. 3.

11 Ibid., q.02.

The defect opposed to distributive justice is undue respect of persons. We may indeed prefer one person to another and gratuitously give more to one than to another. But the sin of undue respect of persons consists in unjustly preferring one person to another, taking from the latter something that is due him. This sin is more grave in the spiritual order than in the temporal order: for example, if we are more attentive to the exterior condition of persons, to their wealth, than to their merits, and if we refuse them the respect which is due them or the spiritual helps which they need.[12]

Interior souls should be particularly watchful on this point and on guard not to slight the friends of God, the saints whom the Lord has chosen for Himself from the humblest stations in life. Injustice is at times the portion of very patient servants of God because everyone knows that they will not complain and will put up with everything. This was often the lot of St. Benedict Joseph Labre because people failed to see the heart of a great saint under the rags of a beggar. On the contrary, clear-sighted souls should sense or divine sanctity in their neighbor, even though it be under the most humble exterior. Moreover, it is a great reward and a great joy to discover sanctity. It must have been a great consolation to verify the sanctity of Benedict Joseph Labre by seeing how he bore insults and blows, when, for example, he kissed the stone which had been thrown at him and had drawn his blood.

Legal Justice, Equity, and the Formation of Character

Above commutative justice and distributive justice is legal or social justice, which should have a lofty form in the Christian and in interior souls. This virtue is concerned, not directly with the rights of individuals, but with the common good of society, and not only of civil society but of that spiritual society, the Church, and the different groups in it. Legal justice leads a man to observe perfectly the laws or constitutions of the society to which he belongs. This virtue inclines the Christian to learn about the laws to be observed and the instructions of the Supreme Pastor, about his encyclicals on present-day questions. The reading and study of these encyclicals are often neglected to the detriment of all. Social justice should give

[12] *Ibid.,* q.63, a. i f.; la Ilae, q-97. a.4; 9.98, a.4.

us an understanding of the common good; it combats individualism, which is one form of egoism.

Social justice disposes us to devote ourselves in generous self-forgetfulness to the general good, and, if necessary, to sacrifice our time, comfort, or personal satisfaction to it. Were we to act otherwise, we would live on the common good like parasites, instead of contributing to promote and maintain it. We receive much from society and to it we are indebted. If we fail in our obligation, we are like mistletoe, which lives on the oak tree at the tree's expense, sometimes causing its death. Society in general, indeed every social group, has its parasites. To react against this vice (into which a man might fall by trying to live like a hermit and being indifferent to the common good), we must perform the duties of legal justice and devote ourselves to the general good, mindful of its superiority. From this point of view, love of our rule, of the holy laws established in the Church, is a great virtue which protects the soul against many disorders.[18]

Lastly, above legal or social justice there is equity.[14] This form of justice is attentive not only to the letter of the law, but especially to its spirit, to the intention of the legislator. As it considers chiefly the spirit of laws, it does not interpret them with excessive rigor, in a mechanical and material manner, but with a superior understanding, especially in certain special circumstances in which, according to the intention of the legislator, it would not be advisable to apply the letter of the law, for then the adage would be verified: "Summum jus est summa injuria." The strict law in all its rigor would then be an injustice and an injury, because the particularly difficult and dis-

[14] When in religious orders dedicated to the apostolate, has been preserved the love of the rule which the saints had, then the spirit of prayer has been kept, studies have flourished and have been made with the spirit of faith, and preaching has been fruitful. We see this in the thirteenth century during the age of St. Dominic, St. Francis, St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, St. Albert the Great. When, in the fourteenth century, the rule was neglected, the spirit of prayer and study declined, and the ministry was fruitless. The Lord had to send saints anew to restore the first fervor. The reason is that moral and spiritual life is an ensemble and a harmony of either acquired or infused qualities, and when man begins to seek himself through egoism, his thought is not slow in descending to the level of his life, and his apostolic zeal disappears.

[14] Cf. IIa IIae, q. no, a. i f. Equity is also called in Latin *epikeia,* from the Greek *M ϋκαιο^* a virtue above simple justice.

tressing exceptional circumstances in which the person involved might be placed would not be taken into account.[16]

Equity, which preserves us from Pharisaism and from the juridical formalism of many jurists, is thus the highest form of justice; it is more conformable to wisdom and to great common sense than to the written law.[18] It has in view, over and above the text of the laws, the real exigencies of the general good and inclines one to treat men with the respect due to human dignity. This is a capital point; its importance is grasped only as one grows older. Equity is a great virtue, whence the expression: It is just and equitable to do this, for example, to practice benevolence toward a dying enemy, toward wounded prisoners of war who need help. Equity has thus some resemblance to charity, which is superior to it.

If we were attentive to these four kinds of justice that should be practiced, we would obviate many conflicts between persons, between classes, between the different groups that ought to labor at one work under the direction of God. These virtues, which are subordinated to charity, would also considerably increase the strength of our will; by withdrawing it from egoism and rectifying it, they would increase its energies more than tenfold. This point should be considered in connection with the Christian education of character, which should succeed in dominating our physical temperament and

[15] The lawmaker considers what happens in the majority of cases; thus he formulates the law, which in a given case, however, could not be applied, says St. Thomas *{ibid.).* For example, every deposit should be returned to its owner; it is not advisable, however, to return to a furious man his sword or any weapon, even if he demands it, for it is easy to foresee that he will make bad use of it. The same holds true, should a man reclaim a deposit of money in order to use it against the common good of his country. In these and in similar cases, it would be wrong to follow the written law; common sense tells us that. In these cases a higher justice surpasses the written law. Then one does not judge the law, but only one of its particular applications. Cf. *ibid.,* a. i, c. and ad zum. For example, if someone should ask you to take a letter to another party which could only pervert him, you can and must avoid giving it to him, and you may even be obliged to prevent the continuation of the evil which might thus be done.

[,e] Cf. IIa IIae, q. 120, a. 2: *"Epikeia* is a subjective part of justice; and justice is predicated of it with priority to being predicated of legal justice, since legal justice is subject to the direction of *epikeia.* Hence *epikeia* is by way of being a higher rule of human actions."

Cf. D. Lallcment, *Principes catholiques d'action civique* (Paris, 1935), pp. 54 f·

which should stamp it in the image of reason illumined by faith. As a matter of fact, the acquired virtues cause the rectitude of right reason to descend into the very depths of the will, and the infused virtues bring to it the rectitude of faith and the very life of grace, a participation in the inner life of God.

Justice and Charity

With a better knowledge of the loftiness of justice under its different forms, we see more clearly the relations to charity which should vivify it from above.

These two virtues have in common the fact that they regulate good relations with others. But they differ from each other: justice prescribes that we give to each man his due and allow him to use it according to his right. Charity is the virtue by which we love God above all else, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God. Therefore it goes far beyond respect for the right of others, in order to make us treat other human beings like brothers in Christ, whom we love like other selves in the love of God.[17]

In brief, as St. Thomas well shows, justice considers our neighbor another person, in that he is a distinct person; charity considers him as another self. Justice respects the rights of another, charity gives over and above these rights for the love of God and of the child of God. To pardon means to give over and beyond.

We can thus see why, as St. Thomas says, "Peace (which is the tranquillity of order in the union of wills) is the work of justice indirectly, in so far as justice removes the obstacles to peace (such as wrongs, injuries); but it is the work of charity directly, since charity, according to its very nature, causes peace. For love is a unitive force . . . ; and peace is the union of the appetites' inclinations."[18]

The Virtues Connected with Justice in Christian Life

Justice, thus vivified by charity, is accompanied by several other virtues that resemble it. Among them, there is one superior to jus-

[17] Cf. Leo XIII, Encyclical *Graves,* VI, 114 (ed. of La Bonne Presse), and D. Lallement, *op. cit.,* p. 54.

[18] Cf. IIa IIae, q.19, a.3 ad 3Utn. Likewise Pius XI, Encyclical *Ubi arcano,* 1,156.

tice, the virtue of religion, which renders to God the worship due Him, interior and exterior worship, devotion (or promptness of the will in the service of God), prayer, sacrifice of adoration, of reparation, of supplication, of thanksgiving. This virtue is opposed to irréligion, or impiety, and also to superstition. It reminds us at the same time of the worship of dulia due to the saints and that of hyperdulia due to the Mother of God. Thus religion is inferior to the theological virtues. To religion penance should be united to make reparation for offenses against God.

To justice are also attached filial piety toward parents and one's country, the respect due to merit, to age, to the dignity of persons, obedience to superiors, gratitude for favors received, vigilance in punishing justly when necessary at the same time using clemency, lastly veracity in speech and in one's manner of living and acting. Veracity, which is a virtue, differs from frankness, a simple inclination of temperament, which sometimes borders on insolence and which forgets that not every truth is to be told.

Justice reminds us that besides strict justice there are the rights and duties of friendship *(jus amicabilej,* in regard to those who are more closely united to us. In respect to people in general, there are also the duties of amiability, which is opposed to adulation and to litigation or useless dispute. Lastly, there are the duties of liberality, which avoids both avarice and prodigality.

All these different forms of justice are of great importance in the conduct of life. At times pious people do not think sufficiently about them; they put on the airs of a hermit more egoistically than virtuously. Under the pretext of charity and the prompting of bitter zeal, they may even fail in charity and justice through rash judgment, slander, insinuation against their neighbor.

If, on the contrary, a man practiced generously the virtues we have just spoken of, his will would be greatly rectified and fortified, better disposed to live by the still higher virtues of hope and charity, which should unite him to God and preserve this union with God in the midst of the varied circumstances of life, even of the most painful and unforeseen. To show oneself a Christian, even in the smallest acts of life, is the true happiness of him who follows Christ.

St. Thomas described the eminent degree of the infused cardinal virtues when he wrote: "Prudence by contemplating the things of God, counts as nothing all things of the world, and directs all the

thoughts of the soul toward God alone. Temperance, as far as nature allows, neglects the needs of the body; fortitude prevents the soul from being afraid of neglecting the body and rising to heavenly things; and justice consists in the soul giving a whole-hearted consent to follow the way thus proposed." [18] These are the perfecting virtues; higher still, according to St. Thomas,[20] are the virtues of the fully purified soul, "the perfect virtues. . . . Such are the virtues attributed to the blessed, or, in this life, to some who are at the summit of perfection."

Thereby we see the grandeur of the virtue of justice, which is the second cardinal virtue. It is superior to fortitude, to temperance, and even to virginity. Justice is often no more than an empty word for some souls; then injustice which must at times be borne reminds them of the real value of justice. This great reality appears especially in the evangelical beatitude: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill." The justice mentioned here is the highest degree of justice, containing eminently all that we have just said.

[18] Cf. la Ilae, q.6i, a.5.
[20] *Ibid.*

CHAPTER X

Patience and Meekness

"In your patience you shall possess your souls."
Luke 21:19

IN the difficult periods through which we have to pass, we should remember what our Lord has told us about the virtue of fortitude, which is necessary that we may not be frightened by any menace, or arrested in the way of salvation by any obstacle. We shall treat here especially of the virtue of patience, which is the most frequent form under which fortitude of soul is exercised in the vexations of life. In the Christian it should be united to meekness, and in such a way that those who are naturally meek may learn to become strong, and those who are naturally inclined to the virtue of fortitude may become meek with the meaning given to the term by the evangelical beatitude: "Blessed are the meek." Thus both will ascend toward the same summit, although by different paths. To make this teaching clear, we shall discuss first of all the virtue of patience, then that of meekness, both of which are in the service of charity.

Patience and Longanimity, Twin Columns of the Interior Life

"Charity is patient."
I Cor. 13:4

Patience, says St. Thomas,[1] is a virtue attached to the virtue of fortitude, which hinders a man from departing from right reason illumined by faith by yielding to difficulties and to sadness. It makes

[1] Cf. II» Hae, q. 136, a. 1.

him bear the evils of life with equanimity of soul, says St. Augustine,[2] without allowing himself to be troubled by vexations. The impatient man, no matter how violent he may be, is a weak man; when he raises his voice and murmurs, he really succumbs from the moral point of view. The patient man, on the contrary, puts up with an inevitable evil in order to remain on the right road, to continue his ascent toward God. Those who bear adversity that they may attain what their pride desires, have not the virtue of patience but only its counterfeit, hardness of heart.

By patience the soul truly possesses itself above the fluctuations of the sensible part depressed by sadness.[8] The martyrs are in the highest degree masters of themselves and free. In patience is met again something of the principal act of the virtue of fortitude: the enduring of painful things without weakening. It is more difficult and meritorious, says St. Thomas, to endure for a long time what keenly vexes nature than to attack an adversary in a moment of enthusiasm.[4] It is more difficult for a soldier to hold out for a long time under a shower of bullets in a cold damp trench than with all the ardor of his temperament to take part in an attack. If the virtue of fortitude bears the blows that may cause death, as we see in the soldier who dies for his country and still more in the martyr who dies for the faith, the virtue of patience endures unflinchingly the contradictions of life.[5] Thus we see that this virtue of patience is the guardian of other virtues; it protects them against the disorders that impatience would cause; it is like a buttress of the spiritual edifice.

Some years ago Americanism spoke rather disdainfully of the so-called passive virtues of patience, humility, and obedience. A good writer replied that they are the twin columns of the moral and spiritual life.

To have patience as a solid virtue, man must be in the state of

[2] *De patientia,* chap. 2.

[3] "In your patience you shall possess your souls" (Luke 21:19).

[4] As St. Thomas says, IIa IIae, q. 123, a.6 ad 1um: "Endurance is more difficult than aggression for three reasons. First, because endurance seemingly implies that one is being attacked by a stronger person. . . . Secondly, because he that endures already feels the presence of danger, whereas the aggressor looks upon danger as something to come. . . . Thirdly, because endurance implies length of time, whereas aggression is consistent with sudden movements."

[5] *Ibid.,* q. 136, a. 4.

grace and have charity, which prefers God to everything else, no matter what the cost. For this reason St. Paul says: "Charity is patient." [6]

If the contradictions of life last for a long time without interruption, as happens in the case of a person forced to live with someone who continually tantalizes him, then there is need of longanimity, a special virtue resembling patience. It is called longanimity because of the length of the trial, the duration of the suffering, the insults, all that must be borne for months and years.

As St. Francis de Sales points out,[7] patience makes us preserve equanimity of mind in the midst of the variableness of the divers mishaps of this mortal life. "Let us frequently call to mind," he says, "that as our Lord has saved us by patient sufferings, so we also ought to work out our salvation by sufferings and afflictions, enduring injuries and contradictions, with all possible meekness. . . . Some are unwilling to suffer any tribulations but those that are honorable: for example, to be wounded in battle. . . . Now these people do not love the tribulation, but the honor wherewith it is accompanied; whereas he that is truly patient suffers indifferently tribulation, whether accompanied by ignominy or honor. To be despised, reprehended, or accused by wicked men, is pleasant to a man of good heart; but to suffer blame and ill treatment from the virtuous, or from our friends and relations, is the test of true patience. . . . The evils we suffer from good men are much more insupportable than those we suffer from others." [8]

To practice this virtue in a manner that is not stoic but Christian, we should often recall the patience of Christ on the cross, which surpasses human thought. For love of us He endured the most severe physical and moral sufferings, which came to Him from the fury of the priests of the Synagogue, from abandonment by His people, from the ingratitude of His own, from the divine malediction due to sin, which Lie willed to bear in our place as a voluntary victim. May the patience of our Savior preserve our souls according to the words of St. Paul: "And the Lord direct your hearts, in the charity of God and the patience of Christ." [9] As a German proverb says,

• Cf. I Cor. 13:4.
• *Introduction to a Devout Life,* Part III, chap. 3, Of Patience.
• *Ibid.*
• Cf. II Thcss. 3:5.

patience yields roses and ends by obtaining all: "Geduld bringt rosen."

When we have to practice this virtue in prolonged trials, we should remember the teaching of the saints, that sufferings well borne are like materials which compose the edifice of our salvation. Sufferings are the portion of the children of God in this life and a sign of predestination: "Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God," we are told in the Acts of the Apostles.[10] It is essential to know how to suffer calmly without excessive self-pity. Those who share most in the sufferings of Christ will be most glorified with Him.[11] Sometimes an act of great patience before death is sufficient; this is the case of many dying persons who are reconciled to God a few days or hours before their last breath.

Supernatural Meekness and Its Fruits

"Charity is kind."
I Cor. 13:14

Meekness, or gentleness, should accompany patience from which it differs in that it has as its special effect, not the endurance of the vexations of life but the curbing of the inordinate movements of anger.[12] The virtue of meekness differs from meekness of temperament inasmuch as, in widely diverse circumstances, it imposes the rectitude of reason illumined by faith on the sensibility more or less disturbed by anger. This virtue is superior to meekness of temperament, as the virtue of chastity is to the laudable natural inclination called modesty; similarly, the virtue of mercy is superior to sensible pity. Meekness of temperament is exercised with facility toward those who please us and is rather frequently accompanied by ill-temper toward others. The virtue of meekness does away with this bitterness toward all persons and in the most varied circumstances. Moreover, into a just severity that is necessary at times, the virtue injects a note of calmness, as clemency mitigates merited punishment. Meekness, like temperance to which it is united, is the friend

10 Acts 14:21.

11 Cf. A. de Boissieu, O.P., *La Patience chez les saints* (ed. *La Vie spirituelle).*

12 *Cf.* IIa line, q. 157, a. 1 f.

of the moderation or the measure which causes the light of reason and that of grace to descend into the more or less troubled sensible appetites.[13] This is so in true martyrs.

Meekness thus conceived should reign not only in our words and conduct, but also in our hearts; otherwise it is only an artifice. As St. Francis de Sales points out, when it is inspired by a supernatural motive and practiced even toward those who are acrimonious, meekness is the flower of charity. "Charity is kind," says St. Paul. The flower is the most beautiful visible part of a plant, that which most draws our gaze, and in spite of its fragility, it has a very important role: it protects the fruit which is forming in it.

Similarly meekness is that which is most visible and most agreeable in the practice of charity; it is what constitutes its charm. It appears in the gaze, the smile, the bearing, the speech; it doubles the value of a service rendered. And besides, it protects the fruits of charity and zeal; it makes counsels and even reproaches acceptable. In vain will we have zeal for our neighbor, if we are not meek; we appear not to love him and we lose the benefit of our good intentions, for we seem to speak through passion rather than reason and wisdom, and consequently we accomplish nothing.

Meekness is particularly meritorious when practiced toward those who make us suffer; then it can only be supernatural, without any admixture of vain sensibility. It comes from God and sometimes has a profound effect on our neighbor who is irritated against us for no good reason. Let us remember that the prayer of St. Stephen called down grace on the soul of Paul, who was holding the garments of those who stoned the first martyr. Meekness disarms the violent.

St. Francis de Sales, who loves analogies taken from nature, remarks: "Nothing so soon appeases the enraged elephant as the sight of a little lamb, and nothing so easily breaks the force of a cannon shot as wool."[14] Thus at times Christian meekness, which inclines a man to present his right cheek when someone strikes him on the left, disarms the person who is irritated. He indeed is the bruised

[13] Acquired meekness causes the light of reason to descend into the sensibility; infused meekness, that of grace. The two are exercised simultaneously in the just man, for the acquired virtue is at the service of the infused, as in the artist the agility of his hand is at the service of his art, or the imagination at the service of the intellect.

[14] *Introduction to a Devout Life,* Part III, chap. 8.

reed; if he is answered in the same tone, he will be completely broken; if he is answered with meekness, he will gradually revive.

St. Francis de Sales also declares: "It is better to make penitents through meekness than hypocrites through severity." In his letters he reverts again and again to advice such as this: "Take care to practice well the humble meekness that you owe to everybody, for it is the virtue of virtues which our Lord greatly recommended to us;[18] and if you should happen to violate it, do not be troubled, but with all confidence, get back on your feet in order to walk anew in peace and meekness as before." Everyone knows that the Bishop of Geneva never tired of saying that more flies are caught with honey than with vinegar. Zeal is necessary, but it should be patient and meek.

We ought, consequently, to avoid bitter zeal, which sermonizes indiscriminately and which has brought about the failure of many reforms in religious orders. Opposing this bitter zeal, which is not inspired by charity but by pride, St. John of the Cross used to say: "There where there is not sufficient love, put love in and you will reap love." [16]

We should also note that meekness, which is spoken of in the beatitude of the meek, corresponds, as St. Augustine and St. Thomas state, to the gift of piety.[17] This gift inspires in us, as a matter of fact, an entirely filial affection toward God; it makes us consider Him more and more as a very loving Father, and consequently it makes us see in men, not strangers, nondescript people or rivals, but brothers, that is, children of our common Father.[18] The gift of piety makes us say more profoundly both for ourselves and for others: "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come. . . We desire that the kingdom of God may take more profound possession of us and of our brethren, and this de-

[18] St. Francis de Sales speaks thus for he here considers meekness as a form of charity, which is the highest of the virtues.

[18] It is interesting to note on this point what was accomplished by a spiritual daughter of St. Francis de Sales, Louise de Ballon, who reformed the Bernardines and founded at least seventeen convents in France and Savoy. Cf. *Louyse de Ballon,* by Myriam de G. (Desclée de Brouwer, 1935), in which the author discusses at length the work of this venerable nun and her teaching, which often reminds one of that of St. John of the Cross. Her maxim was: "Do all in the spirit of prayer."

[17] *De sermone Domini in monte,* chap. 4.

[18] Cf. Ila Ilae, q. 121, a.a.

sire brings to our souls a great supernatural meekness which radiates on our neighbor. Indeed meekness, united to this gift of the Holy Ghost, is like the flower of charity.

To practice this virtue well, we should consider it in our Lord. His meekness is manifestly supernatural, springing from zeal for the salvation of souls; instead of diminishing zeal, meekness protects its fruits.

Isaias had announced the Savior, saying: "Neither shall His voice be heard abroad. The bruised reed He shall not break, and smoking flax He shall not quench." [19] In response to Peter's query as to how often he should pardon his brother, Christ said: "I say not to thee, till seven times; but till seventy times seven times." [20] He willed to be called "the Lamb of God . . . who taketh away the sin of the world." [21] At His baptism the Holy Ghost descended upon Him in the form of a dove, another symbol of meekness.[22] Finally, on the cross He pardoned His executioners while praying for them; it is the smile of meekness in the supreme act of fortitude: the smile of the Crucified is the highest expression of goodness on earth.

Often martyrs, like St. Stephen while he was being stoned, followed the example of Jesus and prayed for their executioners. This very great supernatural meekness is one of the signs by which true martyrs are distinguished from the false. False martyrs die for their own ideas or opinions and through pride rebel against suffering; they may be aided in this by the spirit of evil. The connection or harmony of outwardly contradictory virtues is not manifest in them; their fortitude, which is stubbornness, is not accompanied by meekness. True martyrs, on the contrary, practice meekness even toward their executioners and often pray for them, following the example of Jesus. To forget one's own sufferings in order thus to think of the salvation of one's persecutors, of the good of their souls, is a sign of the highest charity and of all the virtues that are harmonized in it.

Let us often, in practice, ask our Lord for the virtue of meekness united to humility of heart. Let us ask Him for it at the moment of Communion, in that intimate contact of our soul with His, of our

[19] Isa. 42:2 f.
[20] Matt. 18:22.
[21] John 1:29.
[22] Luke j:22.

intellect and heart with His intellect illumined by the light of glory and His heart overflowing with charity. Let us ask Him for it by spiritual communion that is frequently renewed and, whenever the occasion presents itself, let us practice these virtues effectively and generously.

Then we shall see the realization of the words of the Master: "Take up My yoke upon you and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart; and you shall find rest to your souls." [23] We shall find rest for our souls; to know to what extent, we must experience it at a time of trouble and vexation. We should then make a more profound act of humility and meekness, pardoning fully those who have offended or wounded us, and we shall see how true are Christ's words. Our soul will thus take its right place in relation to God and our neighbor; with the help of grace it will be more profoundly restored to order, and it will recover the tranquillity of order, if not joy, at least the interior peace of an upright conscience united to God. We shall thus find peace in love, not the peace which the world can give, but that which comes from God. The peace which the world gives is wholly exterior; it is peace with the spirit of the world, with the enemies of God, with our evil inclinations; consequently it is interior disagreement with good people and with ourselves; it is the death of the soul. If there is any apparent tranquillity in us, it is that of death which hides decomposition and corruption.

The peace which the Lord gives is above all interior, and we cannot have it without incessant war against our inordinate passions, our pride and concupiscences, against the spirit of the world and the devil. For this reason our Lord, who brings us interior peace, says also: "I came not to send peace, but the sword." [24] How, in fact, can we be humble and meek toward all without doing violence to ourselves? Then we have war on the frontiers of our soul, but peace reigns within. In spite of the demands of God's love, we experience that His yoke is sweet and His burden light. The weight of His burden diminishes with the progress of patience, humility, and meekness, which are, as it were, forms of the love of God and of neighbor in the sense in which St. Paul says: "Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not

[23] Matt. 11:29.
[24] Matt. 10:34.

puffed up; . . . is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil; . . . rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never falleth away." [25] It is truly eternal life begun like a prelude of unending beatitude.[20]

[25] Cf. I Cor. 13:4-8.

[20] Supernatural meekness prepares for contemplation. On this subject we should recall the following just observation: "The certitude of being right is no obstacle to meekness of speech. Violence in speaking the truth indicates the existence of pride. Such a way of speaking is singularly prejudicial to the views one upholds" (René Bazin). Man is even more separated from contemplation by taking the point of view of the useful, and not sufficiently that of the honest good. This is, nevertheless, the course of action of many statesmen and also of many nations which enter into conflict with each other because each wishes to consider things "from its own point of view," that is, under the aspect of its own interest, and not from the general and superior point of view that would unite people, whereas earthly interests divide them.

CHAPTER XI

The Value of Chastity and Its Spiritual Fruitfulness

WE have discussed prudence, justice, fortitude, and patience, which are all united to meekness. We must now consider what temperance should be in us, especially under the form in which we most need to practice it, namely, that of chastity, which corresponds to that of the beatitude: "Blessed are the clean of heart." We shall first consider this virtue in the most general manner, as it should be practiced in every condition or type of life, including Christian marriage. To proceed with order, we shall speak of the value of this virtue, of the motive which ought to inspire it. We shall then see its spiritual fruitfulness, especially when it is practiced under its highest form, virginity.[1]

The Motive That Should Inspire Chastity

Chastity, says St. Thomas, is not simply that laudable natural disposition called modesty, a happy inclination, fearful by nature,

[1] Christ tells us: "He that can take, let him take it [the counsel of virginity]" (Matt. 19:12). The Council of Trent, Sess. XXIV, can. 10 (Denz., no. 981), defined against Luther that the state of virginity or of absolute chastity consecrated to God is superior to the conjugal state. St. Paul clearly says so: "Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord; but I give counsel, as having obtained mercy of the Lord, to be faithful. I think, therefore, that this is good for the present necessity, that it is good for man so to be. . . . But if thou take a wife, thou hast not sinned. And if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned; nevertheless, such shall have tribulation of the flesh. But I spare you. . . . He that is without a wife is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord: how he may please God. But he that is with a wife is solicitous for the things of the world: how he may please his wife. And he is divided. . . . But she that is married thinketh on the things of the world: how she may please her husband. . . . But if her husband die, she is at liberty.

which, through its very fear of evil, protects the soul against the disorders of concupiscence. Modesty, no matter how laudable, is not a virtue; it is only a natural good disposition. Chastity is a virtue and, as the name virtue indicates, it is a power. The acquired virtue of chastity, as it appeared in the Vestals, causes the light of right reason to descend into the occasionally disturbed and troubled sensibility. Infused chastity, received at baptism, causes the light of grace to descend into the sensible part of the soul; it makes use of acquired chastity somewhat as the intellect makes use of the imagination. They are exercised together; acquired chastity is thus at the service of infused chastity.[2] Virginity is a still higher virtue, for it offers to God for a whole lifetime the integrity of body and heart which it consecrates to Him. It resembles simple chastity, says St. Thomas, as munificence resembles liberality, since it offers a splendid gift, absolute integrity.[3] According to St. Cyprian and St. Ambrose, it gives the Church a particular splendor[4] and contributes in giving it the luster of the mark of sanctity, to distinguish it from the sects which have renounced the evangelical counsels.

The value of chastity, whether that of virgins, widows, or married people, appears first of all by contrast with the disorders which spring from the concupiscence of the flesh, disorders which often bring in their wake divorce, family dishonor, the unhappiness of married couples and their children. We need only recall the divorce of Henry VIII of England, which drew practically the entire country into schism and then into heresy. To preserve us from similar errors, Christ says to all: "If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out. . . . And if thy right hand scandalize thee, cut it off. . . . For it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than that thy whole body go into hell."[5]

Chastity is lost through the exterior senses, the thoughts, the desires of the heart. It does not admit of any kind of forbidden pleasure. It retrenches even pleasures that are useless though permitted, and it leads man to live detached from them.

Let her marry to whom she wilL . . . But more blessed shall she be, if she so remain" (I Cor. 7:25-40).

2Cf. IIa IIae, q. 151, a. 1-3.

• Cf. *ibid.,* 9.152, a. 3 and ad 5am; a. 5.

* Cf. *ibid.*

' Matt. 5:29 f.

The motive that should inspire chastity is the love of God. Chastity of heart and body is in reality the renunciation of every illicit affection out of love of God. It prevents the life of the heart from descending, so that it may rise toward God like a living flame ever more pure and ardent. Chastity of the body is like bark around chastity of the heart, which is the more precious.

To preserve this virtue we must keep always spiritually close to Jesus crucified, as St. Francis de Sales says.[8] We cannot do this without a twofold mortification: that of the body and senses, especially as soon as danger arises, and that of the heart, by forbidding ourselves every inordinate affection. Such an affection would become not only useless, but harmful, and would start us down a perilous slope. It is only too easy for us to descend, and to slip much more rapidly than we foresee, and it is very difficult to reascend. People sometimes forge chains for themselves which later they lack the courage to break. They end by saying as worldings do: "Human love, if sincere, has undeniable rights." To this we must answer: "There can be no rights contrary to the love due to God, the sovereign Good and Source of all truly generous love."

On inordinate affections, *The Imitation* declares: "Whenever a man desireth anything inordinately, straightway he is disquieted within himself. . . . It is by resisting the passions therefore, and not by serving them, that true peace of heart is to be found. Peace, therefore, is . . . in the fervent and spiritual man."[7] In the same work we read that excessive familiarity with people causes the soul to lose intimacy with our Lord. The author declares: "How foolish and vain, if thou desire anything out of Jesus! Is not this a greater loss to thee than if thou shouldst lose the whole world? . . . Whoever findeth Jesus, findeth a good treasure, a good above every good. . . . For His sake and in Him, let enemies as well as friends be dear to thee; and for all these thou must pray to Him that all may know and love Him."[8] The same sentiments are also expressed in the hymn, *Jesu, dulcis memoria:*

[6] *Introduction to a Devout Life,* Part III, chap. 13. *Ibid.,* chap. 12: "As one may more easily abstain from anger than regulate it, so it is easier to keep ourselves altogether from carnal pleasures than to preserve a moderation in them."

[7] *The Imitation,* Bk. I, chap. 6.

[8] *Ibid.,* Bk. II, chap. 8.

Jesu, spes poenitentibus
Quam pins es petentibus!
Quam bonus te quaerentibus!
Sed quid invenientibus!

To reach this close union with Christ, we must be humble and pure of heart; we must, as St. Francis de Sales says, always practice humility and chastity and, if possible, never or very rarely mention them.

The Spiritual Fruitfulness of Chastity

Chastity practiced in its perfection makes man live in mortal flesh a spiritual life which is like the prelude of eternal life. Since it frees man from matter, it makes him in a manner like the angels. It even has for its effect to make his body increasingly like the soul, and the soul more and more like to God.

When the body lives only for the soul, it tends in fact to resemble it. The soul is a spiritual substance that can be seen immediately only by the spiritual gaze of God and the angels. It is simple because it has no extended parts; it is beautiful, especially when it keeps a continually upright intention, beautiful with the beauty of beautiful doctrines, of beautiful actions; it is calm, in the sense that it is above every corporeal movement; it is incorruptible or immortal because it is simple and immaterial, because it does not depend intrinsically on a perishable body.

By purity the body becomes spiritual, so to speak; from time to time it lets the soul shine through the gaze especially, like the look of a saint in prayer. By this virtue the body becomes simple: in proportion as the attitude of a worldly woman is complex, in the same proportion that of a virgin is simple. As someone has said: "There are two very simple beings: the child, who does not yet know evil; and the saint, who has forgotten it by dint of conquering it." By purity the body grows beautiful, for all that is pure is beautiful: for example, an unclouded sky, a diamond through which light passes without any hindrance. Thus the bodies of the saints represented in the frescoes of Fra Angelico have a supernatural beauty which is that of a soul given entirely to God. By purity the body becomes calm and, in a certain way, even incorruptible; whereas vice withers, ravages, and kills the body prematurely, virginity preserves it.

Neither the body of our Lord nor that of the Blessed Virgin underwent the corruption of the tomb. Not infrequently the bodies of the saints remain intact, and long after their death sometimes exhale an exquisite odor, a sign of their perfect chastity. Their body, which lived only for the soul, still keeps its imprint. The Eucharist leaves, as it were, seeds of immortality in the body, which is destined to rise again and to receive a reflection of the glory of the soul. Christ tells us: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up in the last day."[9]

Since perfect chastity renders the body like to the soul, it is even truer to say that it renders the soul like to God. The three attributes of God appropriated respectively to each of the divine Persons are power, wisdom, love. By perfect purity the soul becomes increasingly strong, luminous, and loving. Here especially appears the fruitfulness of this virtue.

By chastity the soul becomes strong. We have only to recall the courage of the virgin martyrs: St. Cecilia, St. Agnes, St. Catherine of Alexandria, St. Lucy of Syracuse, and many others. Their executioners tired more quickly of torturing them than they did of suffering. St. Lucy declared to her judges that a chaste and pious soul is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Upon this answer, they determined to profane her body by dragging her to a place of debauchery, but she remained rooted to the ground like a pillar of granite; the Holy Ghost kept her for Himself in spite of the efforts of her persecutors. The Lord gave these virgins an invincible strength which made them surmount every fear in the midst of the most severe torments. Though not miraculous, what strength, what moral authority perfect purity gives to religious in hospitals, in prisons, where they often gain the respect of poor perverted creatures who recognize in this virtue a superior power, that of the strong woman whom nothing weakens! For this reason particularly, the Virgin of virgins, the refuge of sinners and consoler of the afflicted, is terrible to the demons. She also bears the name of Mary Help of Christians or Our Lady of Perpetual Help. We may all hope in her power, which is full of goodness.

Likewise by purity the soul becomes luminous: "Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God." The Eagle of the Evangelists was a virgin, and so was St. Paul. St. Thomas, the greatest of

[9] John 6:55.

theologians, was delivered at the age of sixteen from every temptation of the flesh that he might devote his entire life to the contemplation of divine things which he was to teach to others. Perfect purity also gives occasionally to Christian virgins, like Catherine of Alexandria and Catherine of Siena, a supernatural perception enabling them to see in a way even in this life the beauty of God, the sublime harmony of the apparently most contradictory divine perfections, such as God's infinite justice and the tenderness of His mercy. These Christian virgins do not confound the good pleasure of God with arbitrariness; they do not argue about the mysteries of infallible Providence and of predestination, but if they touch upon them, they use exact expressions full of the spirit of faith. This clear vision of pure love has also enabled contemplatives and Christian virgins devoid of theological learning to write unforgettable pages on the spiritual beauty of Christ's countenance, on the secret that unites in Him the most heroic fortitude and the most tender compassion, superabundant sadness and the loftiest serenity, the supreme demands of justice and the inexhaustible treasures of mercy. Only great wisdom knows what can be said and what remains inexpressible on this subject, a mystery that calls for the silence of adoration.

Finally, perfect purity gives to the soul, together with supernatural light, a spiritual love of God and of our neighbor, which is truly the hundredfold and which compensates far in excess of all the sacrifices we have made or still have to make.

In a truly purified heart, the love of God becomes increasingly tender and strong. Far removed from all sentimentality, it rises above the sensibility; in the higher part of the spiritual will, it becomes that living flame of love spoken of by St. John of the Cross. It is the perfect realization of what the supreme precept demands: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind." [10] Under certain touches of the Holy Ghost, the spiritual heart melts, as it were, into that of the Savior to draw from Him greater strength and ever new youth. In this love there is a savor of eternal life.

When the soul consecrated to God is wholly faithful, it merits the name of spouse of Christ. By the strength and tenderness of its love, it is associated with His sorrows, His immortal joys, His profound work in souls, His anticipated or definitive victories.

[10] Luke 10:27.

At the summit of this ascent, there is on earth between the consecrated soul and its God a spiritual marriage, an indissoluble union which transforms it into Him and enables it to say: "My beloved to me, and I to Him." This spiritual marriage is a profound intimacy, reaching at times even to the revelation of most secret thoughts. There are a thousand things which the faithful spouse of Christ divines and foresees. Between Christ and the soul there is perfect communion of ideas, sentiment, will, sacrifice, and action for the salvation of souls; and the reception of the Holy Eucharist each day with greater fervor, a fervor of the will, if not of the sensibility, is the daily testimony of this love.

This very pure and strong love of God and of souls in God is the source of a lofty spiritual paternity or maternity. To convince ourselves of this we need only recall the words of St. John the Evangelist to his children. Our Lord said to His apostles: "Little children, yet a little while I am with you." [11] St. John says to his disciples: "My little children, these things I write to you, that you may not sin." [12] "Your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." [18] "And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He shall appear we may . . . not be confounded by Him at His coming." [14] "Let no man deceive you." [15] "Let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth." [18] "You are of God, little children. . . . Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." [17]

St. Paul speaks with the same fatherly tenderness and strength when he writes to the Galatians: "My little children, of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you. . . . I am ashamed for you." [18] To the Corinthians he writes: [Shall I remind you of] my daily instance, the solicitude for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire?" [19]

Such is spiritual fatherhood in all its generosity, tenderness, and strength. It compensates far and beyond for the temporal fatherhood which the Apostle renounces. He does not found a definite and

[11] John 13:33.
[11] Cf. I John 1:1.
[14] *Ibid.,* 12.
[14] *Ibid.,* 28.
[18] *Ibid., y.-j.*
[17] *Ibid.,* 18.
[19] *Ibid.,* 4:4.
[14] Gal. 4:19 f.
[14] a. II Cor. 11:28 f.

limited home where a life that will last sixty or eighty years is transmitted. He labors to form souls for our Lord, to communicate to them a life that will last forever.

Also worthy of admiration is the spiritual maternity of true religious, who, by increasing fidelity, deserve to be called spouses of Jesus Christ. They exercise this maternity toward abandoned children, the poor who have been forsaken by all, the sick who have no resources, suffering souls who are drifting away, and the agonizing. To such religious Christ will say: "I was thirsty, and you gave Me to drink; . . . I was hungry; . . . naked, . . . sick . . .in prison, and you came to Me. . . . Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me." [20]

Perfect purity renders the soul increasingly like to God, strong, luminous, loving, and makes man share in God's spiritual paternity, in that of the Savior, who came to found not a restricted family, but the great family of the Church which should extend to all peoples and to all generations. All this shows the grandeur of the evangelical counsel of chastity and of its effective practice.

The spirit of this counsel has on occasion also completely transfigured temporal fatherhood or motherhood. One of the greatest examples is that of St. Monica who, having given birth to Augustine, brought him forth spiritually by her tears and prayers. Monica thus obtained the conversion of her son; she became doubly his mother, of body and soul. All who are indebted to St. Augustine for the doctrine he taught should thank the mother to whom Ambrose said: "The son of so many tears could not perish."

To sum up, the moral virtue of chastity, when truly understood and practiced in a high degree, prepares the soul to receive the grace of contemplation, which proceeds from living faith illumined by the gifts. Then begins the realization of the promise: "Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God." The truly pure soul begins, as it were, to see God in prayer, while uniting itself more intimately to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, to the Consecration, and to Communion. It also begins to see divine Providence in the circumstances of life, for "to them that love God [and who persevere in this love], all things work together unto good." [21] Finally, following this way, man begins to see God in the souls of those

[20] Matt. 25:35 f., 40.
[21] Rom. 8:28.

about him; gradually he sometimes discovers, under a thick and opaque envelope, a luminous soul that pleases God far more than he had first thought. Thus to see God in souls is a grace that must be merited. It requires a particular clear perception which is gradually obtained by detachment from self and a more pure and strong love of God, which makes us discover in Him those who love Him and those who are called to love Him, those from whom we can receive and those to whom we can and should give for love of Him.

CHAPTER XII

The Humility of Proficients

> "The Son of man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a redemption for many."
>
> Matt. 20:28

SINCE we are discussing here especially the moral virtues that have a special connection with the theological virtues and the life of union with God, we must consider what humility should be in proficients.

The importance and nature of this Christian virtue show clearly the distance which separates the acquired virtues described by the pagan philosophers from the infused virtues spoken of in the Gospel. In speaking of prudence, we recalled the distance between them, which is based on a distinction of nature. We shall get a clearer idea of this distance in speaking of humility, and even more in considering this virtue in our model, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Humility is considered in all Christian tradition as the foundation of the spiritual life, since it removes pride, which is, says Holy Scripture, the beginning of every sin because it separates us from God. Thus humility has often been compared to the excavation which must be dug for the erection of a building, an excavation which should be so much the deeper in proportion as the building is to be higher. From this point of view, as we have seen,[1] the two principal pillars of the temple to be built are faith and hope, and its dome is charity.

Humility ought certainly to repress pride under all its forms, including intellectual and spiritual pride, which we have already dis-

[1] Cf. *supra,* chap. 7.

cussed.[2] But the principal, essential act and the highest act of humility is not, to be exact, the actual repression of movements of pride. It is evident, in fact, that in our Lord and in Mary there never was a first movement of pride to repress, and nevertheless there was in them and there still is the eminent exercise of the virtue of humility. What is, therefore, the essentially characteristic act of humility, first toward God, then toward our neighbor?

Humility toward God

The act proper to humility consists in bowing toward the earth, called *humus* in Latin, from which the name of this virtue is derived. To speak without metaphor, its essential act consists in abasing ourselves before God and before what is of God in every creature. To abase ourselves before the Most High is to recognize, not only in a speculative but in a practical manner, our inferiority, littleness, and indigence, manifest in us even though we are innocent, and, once we have sinned, it consists in recognizing our wretchedness.

Thus humility is united to obedience and religion, but it differs from them. Obedience is concerned with the authority of God and His precepts; religion considers His excellence and the worship due Him. Humility, by inclining us toward the earth, recognizes our littleness, our poverty, and in its way glorifies the majesty of God. It sings His glory as when the archangel Michael said: "Who is like to God?" The interior soul experiences a holy joy in annihilating itself, as it were, before God to recognize practically that He alone is great and that, in comparison with His, all human greatness is empty of truth like a lie.

Humility thus conceived is based on truth, especially on the truth that there is an infinite distance between the Creator and the creature. The more this distance appears to us in a living and concrete manner, the more humble we are. However lofty the creature may be, this abyss is always infinite; and the higher we ascend, the more evident does this infinite abyss become for us. In this sense, the highest soul is the most humble, because the most enlightened: the Blessed Virgin Mary is more humble than all the saints, and our Lord is far more humble than His holy Mother.

We see the connection of humility with the theological virtues

[2] Cf. Vol. I, chap. II.

by determining its twofold dogmatic basis, which was unknown to the pagan philosophers. At its root are two dogmas. Primarily, it is based on the mystery of creation *ex nihilo,* which the philosophers of antiquity did not know, at least explicitly, but which reason can know by its natural powers. We have been created from nothing; this is the basis of humility according to the light of right reason.®

Humility is also based * on the mystery of grace and on the necessity of actual grace for the slightest salutary act. This mystery exceeds the natural powers of reason; it is known by faith, and it is expressed in these words of the Savior: "Without Me you can do nothing"[8] in the order of salvation.

From this principle spring four consequences in respect to God the Creator, to His providence and to His goodness, which is at once the source of grace and of the remission of sin.

First of all, in relation to God the Creator, we should recognize not only speculatively, but practically and concretely, that of ourselves we are nothing: "My substance is as nothing before Thee."[6] "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" [7] We were created out of nothing by a sovereignly free *fiat* of God, by His love of benevolence, which preserves us in existence, without which we would be immediately annihilated. Furthermore, after creation, though there are a number of beings, there is no increase in reality, no increase of perfection, wisdom, or love; for before creation the infinite plenitude of divine perfection already existed. Therefore in comparison with God we are not.

If all that comes from God were taken away from even our best free acts, strictly speaking nothing would remain, for in such an act one part does not come from us and the other from God. The act is entirely from God as from its first cause, and it is entirely from us as from its second cause. Thus the fruit of a tree is entirely from God as from its first cause and entirely from the tree as from its second cause. We should recognize practically that without God, the Creator and Preserver of all things, we are nothing.

Secondly, in regard to Providence, without God the supreme Ordainer, without His providence which directs all things, our life

' Acquired humility is conceived from this point of view.
* Infused humility is understood here.
"John 15:5.
"Ps. 38:6.
' Cf. I Cor. 4:7.

completely lacks direction. We should, therefore, humbly receive from Him the general direction of the precepts that we may reach eternal life, and the particular direction that the Most High has chosen from all eternity for each one of us. This particular direction is manifested to us by our superiors, who are intermediaries between God and us, by counsels to which we should have recourse, by events, by the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. Consequently we should humbly accept the place, it may perhaps be very modest, which God has willed from all eternity for each one of us. Thus in the religious life, according to the divine will, some should be like the branches of the tree, others like flowers, others like roots hidden in the earth. Yet the root is most useful; it draws from the soil the secretions that constitute the sap necessary for the nourishment of the tree. If all its roots were cut, the tree would die; but it would not die were all its branches and flowers cut. Humility, which leads a Christian, a religious, to accept a hidden place very willingly, is extremely fruitful not only for himself but for others. Christ in His sorrowful life humbly wished the last place, that in which Barabbas was preferred to Him, the opprobrium of the cross; by so doing He became the corner stone in the edifice of the kingdom of God: "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. By the Lord this has been done; and it is wonderful in our eyes." [8] St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians: "You are no more strangers . . . , but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and the domestics of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone."[9]

Such is the solid, marvelously fruitful humility, which even in the most hidden places sings the glory of God. We ought, therefore, to receive humbly the special direction He has chosen for us, even though it should lead us to profound immolation: "The Lord killeth and maketh alive; He bringeth down to hell and bringeth back again. . . . He humbleth and He exalteth." [10] This is one of the most beautiful recurrent themes in the Scriptures.

Thirdly, in this special direction chosen by God for us, we cannot take the slightest step forward, or perform the least salutary

[8] Matt. 21:42.
[9] Eph. 2:i9f.
[10] Cf. I Kings 2:6 f.

and meritorious act without the help of an actual grace. We need this grace particularly to persevere to the end and should, consequently, humbly ask for it.

Even if we had a high degree of sanctifying grace and charity, ten talents for example, we should still need an actual grace for the least salutary act. And especially for a happy death we need the great gift of final perseverance, which we must daily ask for in the Hail Mary with humility and confidence. Christian humility says joyfully with St. Paul: "Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God." [11] "No man can say the Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost." [12] In short, humility should recognize practically and a little better every day the majesty of God the Creator, the Ordainer of all things, and the Author of grace.

Finally, while humility, which recognizes our indigence, should be found in all the just and should be in the innocent man, it is after we commit sin that we should recognize practically not only our indigence, but our wretchedness: the baseness of our selfish, narrow hearts, of our inconstant wills, of our vacillating, whimsical, ungovernable characters; the wretched weaknesses of our minds, guilty of unpardonable forgetfulness and contradictions that they could and should avoid; the wretchedness of pride, of concupiscence, which leads to indifference to the glory of God and the salvation of souls. This wretchedness is beneath nothingness itself since it is a disorder, and it occasionally plunges our souls into a contemptible state of abjection.

The Divine Office often reminds us in the *Miserere* of these great truths: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy, and according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my iniquity. Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. . . . To Thee only have I sinned, and have done evil before Thee. . . . Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed: Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow. . . . Turn away Thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create a clean heart in me, O God; and renew a right spirit within my bowels. . . · Restore unto me the joy of Thy

» Cf. II Cor. 3:5.
Cf. I Cor. 12:3.

salvation." 18 "Who can understand sins? From my secret ones, cleanse me, O Lord." 14

How greatly this abasement of genuine humility differs from pusillanimity, which is born of human respect or of spiritual sloth! Contrary to magnanimity, pusillanimity refuses the necessary labor. Humility, far from being opposed to grandeur of soul, is united to it. A Christian should tend toward great things worthy of great honor, but he should tend toward them humbly and, if necessary, by the way of great humiliations.15 He should learn to say often: "Not to us, O Lord, not to us; but to Thy name give glory." 16

The pusillanimous man is one who refuses to do what he can and should do; he may sin mortally when he refuses to accomplish what is gravely obligatory. Humility, on the contrary, abases man before the Most High that he may take his true place. It abases him before God only to allow God to act more freely in him. Far from becoming discouraged, the humble soul entrusts itself to God and, if the Lord does great things through it, it does not glorify itself any more than the ax in the hands of the woodsman, than the harp in the hands of the harpist. With the Blessed Virgin Mary, the humble soul says: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word."

Humility toward Our Neighbor

Writing on the subject of humility toward our neighbor, St. Thomas says in a manner as simple as profound: "Wherefore every man, in respect of that which is his own, ought to subject himself to every neighbor, in respect of that which the latter has of God's." 17

1· Ps. 50, *passim.*

14 Ps. 18:13.

15 Cf. St. Thomas, Ila Ilae, q. 161, a. 1: "A twofold virtue is necessary with regard to the difficult good: one, to temper and restrain the mind, lest it tend to high things immoderately; and this belongs to the virtue of humility: and another to strengthen the mind against despair and urge it on to the pursuit of great things according to right reason; and this is magnanimity." *Ibid.,* a. 2 ad 30m; q. 129, a. 3 ad 4um. These two virtues are complementary like the two sides of an ogive. The virtues, from the fact that they are connected, grow together like the five fingers of the hand. Consequently one cannot have profound humility without true nobility of soul or magnanimity.

14 Ps. 113:1.

17 Cf. Ila Ilae, q. ıòı, a.3.

In fact, every man, considering that of himself he is nothing, that what he has of himself is only his indigence, defectibility, and deficiencies, ought not only in a speculative way but also in a practical way to recognize that all he has of himself as coming from himself, is inferior to what every other man has from God in the order of nature and that of grace.

The holy doctor adds in substance: It is possible, without falsehood, to deem and avow ourselves the most despicable of men, as regards the hidden faults which we acknowledge in ourselves and the hidden gifts of God which others have.[18] For this reason the Psalmist says: "From my secret ones [sins], cleanse me, O Lord."[19] St. Augustine says also: "Consider that certain people are in a hidden way better than you are, although you may appear morally superior to them."[20]

We should also say with St. Augustine: "There is no sin committed by another which I, by reason of my own frailty, may not commit; and if I have not committed it, it is because God in His mercy has not permitted it and has preserved me in goodness."[21] We should give God the glory for our not having fallen and say to Him in the words of Scripture: "Create a clean heart in me, O God: and renew a right spirit within my bowels."[22] "Convert me, and I shall be converted."[23] "Look Thou upon me, and have mercy on me; for I am alone and poor."[24]

St. Thomas says: "Since God's love is the cause of goodness in things, no one thing would be better than another if God did not will greater good for one than for another."[25] "What hast thou that thou hast not received?"[28] This truth leads the saints to say to themselves when they see a criminal about to undergo the last punishment: "If this man had received the same graces that I have been receiving for so many years, he would perhaps have been less unfaithful than I. And if God had permitted in my life the sins which He permitted in this man's, I would be in his place and he

18 *Ibid.,* a. 6 ad mm.
19 Ps. 18:13.
20 *De virginitate,* chap. 52.
21 We read this statement in substance in the *Confessions,* Bk. Il, chap. 7.
22 Ps. 50:12.
23 Jer. 31:18.
24 Ps. 24:16.
25 Cf. la, q. 20, a. 3.
28 Cf. I Cor. 4:7.

in mine." "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" This is the true basis of Christian humility. All pride should break against these divine words.

The humility of the saints thus becomes ever more profound, for they experience increasingly their own frailty in contrast with the majesty and the goodness of God. We should tend toward this humility of the saints, but should not employ the formulas they use so long as we are not profoundly convinced that they are true. Should we do so, our humility would evidently be false; in comparison with the true virtue, it is like a paste diamond.

Humility toward our neighbor, thus defined by St. Thomas, differs greatly from human respect and pusillanimity. Human respect *{timor mundanus)* is the fear of the judgment and wrath of the wicked; this fear turns us away from God. Pusillanimity refuses the necessary toil; it flees the great things it should accomplish and inclines toward base things. Humility, on the other hand, makes us abase ourselves nobly before God and before what is of God in our neighbor. The humble man does not abase himself before the power of the wicked; thus he differs, says St. Thomas, from the ambitious man who abases himself far more than he should to obtain what he desires, and makes himself a lackey in order to attain power.

Humility does not flee great things; on the contrary it strengthens magnanimity by making man tend humbly toward lofty things. These two virtues, which support each other like the arches of a vault, are complementary. They are magnificently presented to us in our Lord when He says: "The Son of man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister [this is humility], and to give His life a redemption for many [this is magnanimity with zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls]."[27] Our Savior could not tend to greater things and tend more humbly toward them: He willed to give us eternal life by the way of the humiliations of His passion and cross. Thus, all proportion being kept, these two virtues, which in appearance are so contradictory, are united in the saints. The humble John the Baptist did not fear the anger of Herod when he reproved him for his immoral conduct; the apostles in their humility did not fear the opposition of men; they were magnanimous even to martyrdom. There is something similar in all the

[27] Matt. 20:28.

saints, and the more humble they are, the stronger they are, the less they fear human opinions, however formidable these may be. We have an example of this courage in the humble and intrepid Vincent de Paul facing Jansenist pride, which he recognized and denounced, in order to preserve for souls the grace of frequent Communion.

Practically, what must we do to reach the perfection of humility, without which we cannot have that of charity? Our attitude toward praise and reproach is of great importance. In regard to praise, we must not laud ourselves; by so doing we would soil ourselves, as the Italian proverb says: "Chi si loda, s'imbroda." Men praise themselves when they think they are not sufficiently praised by others. Furthermore, we must not seek praise; should we do this, we would render ourselves ridiculous and lose the merit of our good acts. Lastly, we should not take pleasure in praise when it comes; to do so would be to lose, if not the merit of our good actions, at least the flower of merit.

We must, however, mount still higher by acting as we should in regard to reproaches. We must patiently accept deserved reproaches, especially when they come from superiors who have the right and the duty to make them. If we pout, we lose the benefit of these just observations. It is also fitting that we accept patiently at times a reproach that is only slightly deserved or undeserved. Thus, while still a novice, St. Thomas was unjustly reproved for a so-called mistake in Latin while reading in the refectory. He corrected himself as he had been told to do; later at recreation his brethren were astonished and said to him: "You were right. Why did you correct yourself?" "It is better in the eyes of God," answered the saint, "to make a mistake in grammar than to fail in obedience and humility." Lastly, we would do well to ask for a love of contempt, keeping in mind the examples of the saints. When our Lord asked St. John of the Cross: "What do you wish for a reward?" the saint replied: "To be scorned and to suffer for love of Thee." His prayer was granted a few days later in the most painful manner; he was treated like an unworthy religious in a scarcely credible fashion. Likewise St. Francis of Assisi said to Brother Leo: "If when we arrive this evening at the door of the convent, the brother porter does not wish to open the door for us, if he takes us for thieves and receives us with blows and leaves us outside all night in the rain and cold, then we must say: *Santa letizia,* that is, what joy, O Lord,

to suffer for Thee and to become a little like Thee." The saints reached even this height.

St. Anselm admirably described the degrees of humility: "(i) to acknowledge ourselves contemptible; (2) to grieve on account of this; (3) to admit that we are so; (4) to wish our neighbor to believe it; (5) patiently to endure people's saying it; (6) willingly to be treated as a person worthy of contempt; (7) to love to be treated in this fashion." [28]

These higher degrees are stated in all books of piety, but, as St. Teresa says: "The disposition to practice this (the higher degrees of humility) must be, in my opinion, the gift of God; for it seems to me a supernatural good." [29] They presuppose a certain infused contemplation of the humility of the Savior crucified for us and the ardent desire to become like to Him.

It is certainly fitting to tend to this lofty perfection. Rare are they who attain it; but before reaching it, the interior soul has many occasions to recall these words of Jesus, which are so simple, profound, and truly imitable, all proportion being kept: "The Son of man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a redemption for many." [30] This is the deepest humility united to the loftiest grandeur of soul.

In our way we should also follow the Savior and gradually be conformed to Him. For this reason we shall devote the following chapter to a consideration of the humility of Jesus as the eminent examplar of ours.[31]

[28] *Lib. de similitudinibus,* chaps. 101-9, quoted by St. Thomas, IIa IIae, q. 161, a.6 ad jum.

[29] *Life* by herself, chap. 31; *The Way of Perfection,* chap. 12.

[30] Matt. 20:28.

[31] Cf. St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to a Devout Life,* Part III, chaps. 4-7, in which the saint discusses humility, the voluntary recognition of our abjection and nothingness. Humility conceals the other virtues and seeks to hide itself; it scarcely speaks of humility. Humility which does not produce generosity is without a doubt false. Humility does not neglect the care of a good reputation, but it endures contempt with joy.

CHAPTER XIII

The Humility of the Word Made Flesh and What Ours Should Be

> "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who . . . emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant."
>
> Phil. 2:5-7

IN studying humility, we should consider how it was practiced by our Lord Himself, whose example we should follow, and see how this abasement is united in Him to the highest virtues.

The Humility and Magnanimity of Christ

In the second chapter of his epistle to the Philippians, St. Paul, wishing to exhort us to humility, speaks of the infinite majesty of the Savior that we may better see to what an extent He humbled Himself. The union of these two extremes is amazing, and should be found to some extent in Christian perfection.

In this celebrated passage, St. Paul teaches clearly the eternal pre-existence of the divine person of Christ. He tells us: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross."

"Being in the form of God . . ." The word "form" in St. Paul's text designates intimate, fundamental, essential being; in this case, the nature of God. In other words, although the only Son of the Father is truly God, "the brightness of His glory, and the figure

of His substance," as we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews,[1] He did not eagerly retain His equality with God.

Lucifer, on the contrary, though only a creature, wished to be equal to God and not to recognize in practice any master superior to himself. In the error of his pride, he exclaimed: "I will be like the Most High,"[2] and in order to tempt us he tells us: "You shall be as gods."[3]

Jesus, who is truly God, emptied Himself. St. Paul here affirms the divinity of Christ as clearly as it is expressed in the prologue to St. John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."[4]

"He emptied Himself." How? He did not lose His divine nature; He remained what He was, but He took or assumed our poor human nature. In coming down from heaven, He did not leave it, but He began to dwell on earth in the humblest condition. In this sense He emptied Himself.

Whereas the divine nature is the infinite plenitude of all perfections, human nature is as if empty, although it aspires to plenitude; the human intellect is at the beginning like a blank page on which nothing is written. The only Son of God emptied Himself, taking our human nature, which is infinitely below the divine nature, and even below the purely spiritual nature of the angels, even of the lowest among them.

"He took the form of a servant," for man, God's creature, is the servant of the Most High. The only Son of the Father therefore took in His divine person the nature of a servant, the condition of a slave, so that one and the same person might be the Son of God and the Son of man, that the same person might be the only Son begotten from all eternity and the Infant in the crib at Bethlehem and the Man of sorrows nailed to the cross.

"Being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man." He wished to be rendered like His brethren in all things, sin excepted; even more, He wished to be born among the poor. He was

[1] Heb. 1:3.
[2] Isa. 14:14.
[3] Gen. 3:5.
[4] John 1:1, 18.

cold and hungry, like a man of humble condition. He was tired and worn out, as we are and more than we are.

St. Paul adds, penetrating far more deeply into this mystery: "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death." The God-man humbled Himself. We read in Ecclesiasticus: "The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God: for great is the power of God alone, and He is honored by the humble." [6] For this reason Christ Himself tells us: "Learn of Me because I am meek, and humble of heart." [e]

The sign of humility is obedience. Pride, on the contrary, inclines us to do our own will and to seek what exalts us, not to wish to be directed by others, but to direct them. Obedience is opposed to this pride. The only Son of the Father came down from heaven to save us, to cure our pride, becoming obedient unto death, and even to the death of the cross.

Obedience renders our acts and sufferings meritorious to such an extent that, useless as they may appear, they may become very fruitful. One of the marvels accomplished by our Savior is to have rendered fruitful what was most useless, that is, suffering. He glorified it by obedience and love. Obedience is great, heroic, when man does not refuse death and does not flee ignominy. Now the death of the Word made flesh was most ignominious. It was announced by the Book of Wisdom, in the words of thè impious directed against the wise man par excellence: "Let us condemn him to the most shameful death." [7] Death on the cross was considered precisely by the Romans and Jews as an infamous and horrible torture reserved to slaves. We read in Deuteronomy: "He is accursed of God that hangeth on a tree.'" [8] And St. Paul says to the Galatians: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law [which is powerless to justify us], being made a curse for us; for it is written: 'Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.' " [9] This abasement was necessary before Christ entered into His glory as Redeemer.

Likewise in the Epistle to the Hebrews, St. Paul speaks of "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure of the Egyp-

[6] Ecclus. j:2of.
[e] Matt. 11:29.
[7] Wisd. 2:20.
[8] Deut. 21:23.
[9] Gal. 3:13.

tians." [10] Farther on, he says: "Jesus, the author and finisher of faith . . . endured the cross, despising the shame, and now sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God." [11]

We can thus see how the cross of the Savior was "a stumbling-block" for the Jews.[12] They had to believe that the wood of malediction became the instrument of salvation, that He who was fastened to it, instead of being accursed of God, was to become the source of every grace, the object of love and adoration.[18]

All that St. Paul says is already contained in the mystery of the nativity of the Lord, who came down from heaven for our salvation, as the *Credo* states. The infant Jesus foresaw all these painful and glorious events. As we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "When He cometh into the world, He saith: 'Sacrifice and oblation [of the Old Law] Thou wouldst not; but a body Thou hast fitted to Me. . . . Then said I: Behold, I come to do Thy will, O God.' "[14] This heroic example of humble obedience should be always before our eyes.

The liturgy of Christmas continually recalls this example by contrasting the humility and the majesty of our Savior:

Memento, salutis auctor,	Author of grace, sweet Savior mine,
Quod nostri quondam corporis	Remember that Thy flesh divine
Ex illibata Virgine	From the unsullied Virgin came,
Nascendo formam sumpseris.	Made like unto our mortal frame.

And in the office for Christmas we read these words of Pope St. Leo: "The two natures, divine and human, without losing their properties, are united in a single person; humility is sustained by majesty, weakness by power, mortality by eternity. If the Savior were not truly God, He would not bring the remedy; and if He were not truly man, He would not be an example for us."

In the nativity of Jesus everything speaks to us of His humility. We read in St. Luke: "She brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger;

10 Heb. 11:26; cf. 13:13.
11 *Ibid.,* 12:2.
12 Cf. I Cor. 1:23.
12 Cf. J. M. Vosté, O.P., *Studia Joarmea,* p. 323.
14 Heb. 10:5, 9.

because there was no room for them in the inn." [16] There was no room for the Word of God made flesh; a fact we must not forget when there is no room for us. The first adorers were poor shepherds "watching, and keeping the night-watches over their flock." But a multitude of angels descended from heaven singing: "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will." [18]

The two extremes are united: "The Word was made flesh." It is the joining of supreme riches and perfect poverty to give men redemption and peace. It is impossible to conceive a more intimate union of a more profound humility and a more lofty dignity. The two infinitely distant extremes are intimately united; God alone could do it. It is not only beautiful, it is sublime, an extreme elevation in the order of the spiritually beautiful. It is what makes the grandeur of Christ's physiognomy. He always tends toward very great things, worthy of the greatest honor, but He tends to them most humbly with full submission to the will of His Father and acceptance in advance of all the humiliations of the Passion and cross, which He foresees from His infancy. He exemplifies the closest union of perfect humility and loftiest magnanimity.

The Union of Humility and Christian Dignity

In what regard must we imitate Christ in the union of humility and Christian dignity? How can we harmonize these two extremes in our lives: a humility which should always grow and the keen desire for perfection and union with God? On the one hand, the Lord tells us to abase ourselves, so much so that we cannot humble ourselves too greatly, and on the other hand, we read in Scripture: "Be ye also perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."

How can we harmonize this abasement which is demanded of us, with the ardent desire for our progress? Souls fear to fail in humility by aspiring to a union with God of which they feel unworthy. The Jansenists went so far as to say that out of humility one should only rarely receive Communion. This practical difficulty exists especially, it is true, for souls that have lost the superior simplicity which comes from grace; but it may exist for us when

[16] Luke 2:7.
[18] *Ibid.,* 2:14.

we have to distinguish between true and false humility in ourselves. We experience it particularly when we must defend our way of living against that of others. At the beginning of the discussion we may speak solely for love of truth, but if we are constrained, often we reply with the impatience and pride of wounded self-love.

The simplest souls find the solution of this problem in rereading what Scripture says about the union of these two extremes: "Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven."[17] "Be you humbled therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in the time of visitation: casting all your care upon Him for He hath care of you."[18] "Be humbled in the sight of the Lord, and He will exalt you."[19] "The Lord killeth and maketh alive, He bringeth down to hell and bringeth back again. The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich, He humbleth and He exalteth."[20]

The union of deep humility and supernatural magnanimity is particularly mysterious in the saints. In this respect they reproduce the life of the Savior, while remaining far from His perfection. This point must be emphasized, for in it is a great lesson for us. On the one hand, the saints declare that they are the least of men because of their infidelity to grace, and on the other hand they have a superhuman dignity. For example, St. Paul says of himself: "He rose again the third day . . . and was seen by Cephas, and after that by the eleven. Then he was seen by more than five hundred brethren at once . . . and last of all He was seen also by me as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God."[21] He even speaks of the infirmities that humiliate him and oblige him to pray God to come to his relief.[22]

On the other hand, when St. Paul had to defend his ministry against false apostles, he wrote with magnanimity: "They are Hebrews: so am I. . . . They are the ministers of Christ (I speak as one less wise): I am more; in many more labors, in prisons more frequently, in stripes above measure, in deaths often. . . . Thrice

17 Matt. 18:4.
18 Cf. I Pet. 5:6 f.
19 Jas. 4: to.
20 Cf. I Kings 2:6 f.
21 Cf. I Cor. 15:4-9.
22 Cf. II Cor. 12:7.

was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned.''[23] He enumerates his labors, his cares; he even speaks of the visions and revelations he received from God. But finally, reverting to a deeper humility he writes: "And lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me [that I might not become proud]. For which thing thrice I besought the Lord that it might depart from me. And He said to me: 'My grace is sufficient for thee; for power is made perfect in infirmity.' Gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me." [24]

In his commentary on this chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Thomas speaks admirably of the union of humility and magnanimity in St. Paul. He writes as follows: "As charity is the root of the virtues, pride is the beginning of every sin.[28] It is the inordinate desire of our own excellence: we desire it then without subordinating it to God. Thus we turn away from Him, which is the beginning of every sin; for this reason God resists the proud.[28] As there is in good people the good of which they may become proud, God sometimes permits some infirmity in His elect, some defect, and occasionally a mortal sin, which prevents them from becoming proud, which truly humiliates them, and makes them recognize that they cannot hold out or persevere by their own strength. The apostle St. Paul in particular might have grown proud of many things: he was a vessel of election to carry the faith to the Gentiles;[27] he had been ravished to the third heaven and heard secret words, which it is not granted to man to utter; [28] he had suffered greatly for Christ, several times he had been cast into prison, and scourged; he was a virgin (having obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful); [29] he had labored more than all, as he says;[80] and in particular he had a lofty knowledge of divine things which may be the source of pride. For this reason the Lord gave him a remedy for pride. That the excellence of the revelations made

[23] *Ibid., 11:22-25.*
[24] *Ibid.,* 12:7-9.
[28] Cf. Ecclus. 10:15.
[28] Jas. 4:6.
[27] Acts 9:15.
[28] Cf. II Cor. 12:4.
[58] Cf. I Cor. 7:25.
[80] *Ibid.,* 15:10.

to him might not make him proud, he received a sting in the flesh, a humiliating infirmity which crucified his body in order to heal his soul. . . . As he says, an angel of Satan came and buffeted him. How the sinner should tremble if the great Apostle, the instrument of election, is not sure of himself! Three times he ardently begged the Lord to deliver him from this sting; three times, that is, often and urgently. He then heard these words: 'My grace is sufficient for thee,' it will preserve thee from sin. Divine power is shown in weakness, which is an occasion for the exercise of the virtues of humility, patience, and abnegation. The man who knows his weakness is more attentive to resisting it and, because he struggles, he grows in strength. 'Gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities,' says St. Paul, since I am thus more humble, and I must fight that the power of Christ may dwell in me and bear all its fruits of grace." [81]*

Something similar occurred in the life of St. Peter, who was humiliated because he denied our Lord during the Passion. Peter thus lost all presumption and placed his confidence no longer in himself, but in God alone.

The principle of the harmonizing of humility and Christian magnanimity is expressed in these words of St. Paul: "We have this treasure [of divine truth] in earthen vessels, that the excellency may be of the power of God and not of us." [32] One of the most beautiful formulas of the harmonizing of humility and magnanimity is the following, taken from the works of St. Thomas: "The servant of God should always consider himself a beginner and always tend toward a more perfect and holy life without ever stopping." [83]

Thus in the great saints humility and magnanimity are harmonized; they tend toward great things in the midst of trials and humiliations. There is, however, always an immense difference between them and the Savior; Christ who was most humble is sinless, without the slightest fault to deplore, most humble in His absolute impeccability and His sovereign dignity.

[81] St. Thomas, *In Epist. II ad Cor.,* 12:7.

[32] Cf. II Cor. 4:7.

[83] Cf. St. Thomas, *Comm, in Ep. ad Hebr. VI,* lect. 1: "Quantum ad aestimationem, semper debet homo esse sicut incedens et tendens ad majora, Phil. 3:12. *Non quod jam coeperim aut quod jam perfectus sim.* . . . Et semper debet niti homo transire ad statum perfectum, Phil. 3:13: *Quae retro sunt obliviscens, ad ea quae priora sunt me extendens."*

In the Blessed Virgin Mary, due proportion being kept, there is something similar. She was preserved from every sin, and in her *Magnificat* she appears at one and the same time very humble and very great, terrible to the demon: "My soul doth magnify the Lord. . . . He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid; for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me. . . . He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble." [84]

Something analogous appears also for our consolation in the life of the Church, the spouse of Christ. Throughout its history Christ's words are verified: "Everyone that exalteth himself, shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." [85] Christ made this statement when He spoke of the guests who took the first places, and again in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican.[36] In persecutions the Church often seems conquered; yet it is always victorious. In its humility it tends toward the great things which are the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Lastly, there should be something similar in every Christian, especially in every religious. He must be truly humble like a root hidden under the ground, and he should always tend toward these great things, a more living faith, a more firm hope, a more ardent charity, a union with God that is daily more intimate, pure, and strong. Thus extremes are harmonized, like the deep root of the tree which symbolizes humility and the loftiest branch which is the figure of charity. AU the virtues are connected and grow together, just as the root buries itself ever deeper in the soil, while the tallest branch reaches up toward heaven.

Thus in the mystical body of the Savior should be realized what St. Leo said of Christ Himself: "Humility is sustained by majesty, weakness by strength, mortality by eternity." Gradually in the mystical body of Christ "that which is mortal, may be swallowed up by life." [87] "For this corruptible must put on incorruption,"[88] that the mystery of the redemption may be accomplished, that the incarnate Word may apply to us the fruit of His merits and be actually and fully the Author of salvation.

[84] Luke 1:46-52.
[85] Luke 14:11.
[86] Luke 18:14.
[87] O. II Cor. 5:4.
[88] Cf. I Cor. 15:53.

What majesty there is in the title *Salutis auctor!* And how well united it is with these words: "Learn of Me, because I am meek, and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls."[39] May the Savior grant us the grace to become like to Him. We have no true humility except that which He gives us; therefore we must sincerely beg it of Him and accept the road which leads to it.

APPENDIX

The Glory of the Cross

> "He humbled Himself . . . even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above all names."
>
> Phil. 2:8 f.

(We reproduce here a manuscript that has come into our possession, and have added some explanatory notes. It is a meditation on the glory of Christ in relation to the depth of His humiliations and sufferings.)

"For God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son."[1] In the great mystery of the Incarnation, the mystery of ineffable love, there is a core which is impenetrable to human reason, a secret which God alone reveals: the reason for the immense sufferings of the redemptive Passion.

If, in the presence of the crucifix, each Christian can say: "Jesus crucified, pledge of the love of my Father," not one is capable of telling the reason which motivated the decree of the Passion and death of the Son of God. This decree is the secret of divine love.[2]

We adore the excesses of humiliation, the indescribable ignominies to which the incarnate Word subjected Himself in obedience to His Father and through love of men, His brethren, but we cannot ex-

·· Matt. 11:29.

'John 3:16.

* We are not concerned here with the motive of the Incarnation, but with that of the immense sufferings of the redemptive Passion, since the smallest act of love of the Savior was sufficient to redeem us.

plain these excesses, this ocean of sufferings, until the Lord Himself lifts the veil covering this "holy of holies." Then the mystery still remains a mystery, but the soul, enlightened regarding its secret, contemplates in ecstasy the ineffable harmonies of the divine masterpiece: the glory of the redemptive cross.

The words of holy Scripture: "I will not give My glory to another," [3] sum up what is hidden in this secret of the passion and death of Christ Jesus, and contain at the same time the marvelous harmony of all the divine words.

From all eternity God willed the Incarnation of the Word, His Son, as Redeemer of the world and head of redeemed humanity. In our Lord Jesus Christ [habitual] grace has for its principal end the most eminent union that God can grant to a created nature, that is, the hypostatic union, by which the Son of Mary, while enjoying the beatific vision from the moment of His incarnation, could affirm: "The Father and I are one." This grace was given to Jesus Christ for the end which determined His coming to earth: this end is no other than the satisfaction which, as head of His mystical body, He was to offer to the thrice holy God.

However, by reason of the infinite dignity of the person of the Word, a single drop of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ would have sufficed to redeem a thousand worlds, did they exist. Therefore, not in the necessity of redeeming sinful humanity should we seek the motive for the excesses of the most holy passion and death of Christ. Let us seek it, rather, in the splendors of the glory of the Incarnation (or of the manifestation of the radiating goodness of the Savior), because it is there that we shall find it. The essential glory of God, the incommunicable and essential glory of the adorable Trinity became in the mystery of the Incarnation the magnificent portion of the sacred humanity of Jesus, as the Eagle of the Evangelists says in the prologue to his Gospel: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we saw His glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." [4]

The excesses of the sorrow and humiliation of the passion and death of our Lord were the compensation demanded by divine wisdom, which does all things with weight and measure, in ex-

• Isa. 42:8; 48:11.
[4] John 1:14.

change for the ineffable glory which the God-man would enjoy eternally.[5] "I will not give My glory to another." Yahve had spoken through His prophet, and these words were not belied, not even in favor of the incarnate Word, since by His passion and death our Lord Jesus Christ not only snatched the entire world from the domination of Satan and death, but in addition He won for His most sacred humanity the right to be enthroned in the eternal tabernacles at the right hand of the Father. Our Lord alluded to the necessity of conquering this right[8] on the evening of His resurrection when He said to the disciples of Emmaus: "O foolish, and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?" [7] In fact, the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ is admirable, indescribable, since it is the glory of the only Son of the Father, and as such this glory exceeds the capacity of comprehension of human and angelic intellects; only God Himself can fully appreciate it, since He alone knows Himself perfectly.

Although the glory of the only Son is ineffable, a Gospel text gives us a little light on the subject: "He that believeth in Me, as the Scripture saith, Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." [8] Jesus spoke this to all in a loud voice on the feast of tabernacles. And the Evangelist St. John adds: "This He said of the Spirit which they should receive who believed in Him." To give the Holy Ghost to souls is the glory of the risen Christ, a glory that is unique, ineffable. Sacred Scripture continues: "For as yet the Spirit was not given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."[9] The Holy Ghost will be given on Pentecost when, through the humiliations of His passion and death, the Lord Jesus will enter into His glory because "he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted." [10]

And who has ever humbled himself like the Pontiff of the New Law, Christ our Lord? Consequently, in justice no one ever was or ever will be as exalted as He: "He humbled Himself, becoming

[6] The author certainly does not mean that by His dolorous passion Christ merited the Incarnation; the principle of merit cannot be merited. However, he does mean, as he says farther on, that Christ thus merited the exaltation of His name, as St. Thomas Aquinas affirms with all tradition.

• What He had by right of birth, He had also by right of conquest.

[7] Luke 24:23 f.

• John 7:38.

• *Ibid.,* 39.

[10] Luke 18:14.

obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him and hath given Him a name which is above all names: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father." [11] *O gloria crucis.*[12]

The pages just quoted throw special light on the Savior's humiliations, the dark night of His passion, and also on the night through which the saints must pass. This manuscript enables us to understand better what St. John of the Cross wrote about the night of the soul, and the reparatory sufferings which great servants of God like St. Paul of the Cross have had to bear. It is a well-known fact that having been raised to the transforming union at the age of thirty-one, St. Paul of the Cross spent forty-five years in continual and most profound interior sufferings for the salvation of sinners. He was closely configured to Jesus crucified: the depths, the duration, the continuity of his sufferings were proportioned to the "eternal weight of glory," to use the expression of St. Paul, which he was to receive in heaven.

Thus we see the elevation of the infused virtues and what the progress of humility should be in proficients and the perfect: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." [18]

[11] Phil. 2:8-11.

[12] St. Thomas says the same things (IIIa, q.46, a. 1): "Christ . . . merited the glory of being exalted, through the lowliness of His passion." See also, *ibid.,* a. 3: By His dolorous passion Jesus also manifests to us the excess of His love, even to the folly of the cross. As a result, men are much more enlightened on the gravity of sin and the value of grace, the seed of eternal life, participation in the intimate life of God.

[18] Luke 18:14.

CHAPTER XIV

The Spirit of Poverty

"Blessed are the poor in spirit."
Matt. 5:3

SINCE we have treated of humility and meekness, it is fitting that we consider the virtues corresponding to the evangelical counsels. As we have already spoken of virginity in connection with chastity, it remains for us to explain how poverty and obedience cooperate in Christian perfection.

To attain perfection, man must practice the three counsels effectively: in other words, in the use of legitimate goods it is expedient that he retrench before reaching the limit of what is permitted, that he may not be led into excess. The effective practice of the three counsels, as we have seen,[1] is a road leading more easily, rapidly, and surely to perfection, which is reached in this way more often in the religious life than in the married state. However, Christian perfection does not consist essentially in the practice of the counsels; it is chiefly in charity.[2] Moreover, to reach perfection, one must have at least the spirit of the counsels, which is the spirit of detachment, as St. Paul says: "The time is short. It remaineth that they also who have wives be as if they had none; . . . and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as if they used it not. For the fashion of this world passeth away." [3]

We shall discuss, first of all, the spirit of poverty, recommended to all by our Lord when He said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit."

[1] Cf. Vol. I, chap. 13.
[2] Cf. IIa IIae, q. 184, a. 3.
[3] Cf. I Cor. 7:29-31.

The Value of Voluntary Poverty

The meaning of this evangelical beatitude is as follows: blessed are they who have not the spirit of wealth, its pomp, pride, insatiable avidity; but who have the spirit of poverty and are humble. Christ says: "For theirs is the kingdom of heaven"; not only will it be theirs later on, but in a sense it is theirs even now.

Voluntary poverty can be practiced either in the midst of the abundance of worldly goods, when the spirit is not attached to them, or in destitution when one bears it generously for love of God. The value of voluntary poverty may even appear to those who have not faith, because they see the disorders which arise from cupidity, the concupiscence of the eyes, the desire of riches, avarice, the excesses of capitalism, and the forgetfulness of the poor who are dying of hunger.

We must begin to detach ourselves from earthly goods in order to grasp clearly the following truth often uttered by St. Augustine and St. Thomas: "Contrary to spiritual goods, material goods divide men, because they cannot belong simultaneously and integrally to a number." [4] A number of persons cannot possess integrally and simultaneously the same house, the same field, the same territory; whence dissensions, quarrels, lawsuits, wars. On the contrary, spiritual goods, like truth, virtue, God Himself, can belong simultaneously and integrally to a number; many may possess simultaneously the same virtue, the same truth, the same God who gives Himself wholly to each of us in Communion.

Therefore, whereas the unbridled search for material goods profoundly divides men, the quest for spiritual goods unites them. It unites us so much the more closely, the more we seek these superior goods. And we even possess God so much the more, the more we give Him to others. When we give away money, we no longer possess it; when, on the contrary, we give God to souls, we do not lose Him; rather we possess Him more. And should we refuse to give Him to a person who asks for Him, we would lose Him.

Consequently to combat cupidity, the concupiscence of the eyes, the desire of riches, avarice, and the forgetfulness of the poor, our Lord counseled voluntary poverty, or detachment in regard to

[4] St. Thomas, IIIa, q.23, a.1 ad 1um: "Spiritual goods can be possessed by many at the same time; not so material goods." Cf. Ia IIae, q.28, a.4 ad 2um.

earthly goods which divide men. Christ leads us thus to desire keenly spiritual goods, which unite men.

The spirit of detachment is even necessary for the Christian that he may clearly understand the true meaning of the right of individual ownership instead of infringing on this right, which is often forgotten; interior souls should have a profound knowledge of it. As St. Thomas shows, the right of ownership is the right to acquire and to administer material goods; but in regard to their use, they must be given readily to those who are in need.®

St. Paul says: "Charge the rich of this world not to be high-minded nor to trust in the uncertainty of riches, but in the living God, who giveth us abundantly all things to enjoy: to do good, to be rich in good works, to give easily, to communicate to others, to lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the true life." [6]

Such is the spirit of detachment; it should remind all of us of what St. Thomas says elsewhere: namely, that if a poor man in a case of extreme necessity asks for a piece of bread and is refused, he may take it, and not be guilty of theft. He has a right to it in order not to die of hunger. A man's life is clearly worth more than a piece of bread which we have not the right to retain jealously if one of our brothers is in absolute need of it.

It is a precept that a man should give alms from his superfluity that he may aid him who is in grave necessity.7 What has been said of a piece of bread should be said of clothing and necessary shelter. There must be a return to the spirit of evangelical poverty in order to combat today the abuses of capitalism which exasperate the laborer who is out of work and unable to feed his children. Scripture tells us: "Whilst the wicked man is proud, the poor is set on fire." [8] The rich man, far from being a monopolist, should administer the goods given by God in such a way that the poor profit in regard

"Cf. IIa IIae, q.66, a.2: "Two things are competent to man in respect to exterior things. One is the power to procure and dispense them, and in this regard it is lawful for man to possess property. . . . The second thing that is competent to man with regard to external things is their use. In this respect man ought to possess external things, not as his own, but as common, so that, to wit, he is ready to communicate them to others in their need (1 Tim. 6:17 f.)." Cf. Ia IIae, q. 105, a.2, c.

•Cf. I Tim. 6:17-19.

' Cf. IIa IIae, q.32, a.5.

• Ps. 10 (according to the Hebrews): 1.

to what is necessary. Then man no longer lives under the reign of covetousness and jealousy, but under the dominion of God.[9]

It is fitting today to recall these elementary truths even when speaking of the progress of the interior life, for the grave disturbances and perils of modern society require that we consider these truths from a higher point of view and that we put them into practice with a great spirit of faith and detachment. This is the true remedy for two extreme deviations which are mutually contradictory: the abuses of capitalism and the excesses of communism, two contrary disorders springing from a materialistic conception of human life and from forgetfulness of the Gospel.[10] The value of voluntary poverty is brought out by these very disorders, which are disturbingly serious.

The value of detachment appears in a more positive way when we remember the true goods we should ardently desire. Christ tells all of us what they are, and interior souls should have a deeper understanding of His teaching: "Be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than the meat, and the body more than the raiment? Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, . . . and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they? Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore solicitous for tomorrow; for the morrow will be solicitous for itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." [11]

The spirit of detachment thus leads us to a stronger desire for the goods of heaven and to reliance on the help of God to reach the end of the journey. Voluntary poverty and confidence in God go hand in hand; the more detached man is from earthly goods, the more he desires those of heaven; and the less he relies on human helps, the more he places his confidence in God's help. Thus confidence

[9] His Holiness, Pius XI, points out in one of his encyclicals that the Lord distributes temporal goods to the good and the bad with holy indifference. Temporal goods have in reality no value in themselves; their worth lies in the use that is made of them in view of eternal life.

[10] The saints have often said that love is an act by which cupidity retrenches its superfluity so that others may have what is necessary. . . . The Incarnation of the Word is the example of compassion.

These thoughts often recur in the *Imitation de la vie pauvre de Notre Seigneur,* a work attributed to Tauler, and in his authentic sermons.

[11] Matt. 6:23-34.

in God is the soul of holy poverty. All Christians should have the spirit of this counsel.

Since we are considering the effective practice of voluntary poverty, let us recall the answer our Lord gave to the rich young man who wished to know the surest road to perfection. Christ answered him: "Go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven. And come, follow Me. Who being struck sad at that saying, went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." [12] He preferred to keep them rather than to follow our Lord and win souls, rather than to become a "fisher of men" like the apostles.

The effective practice of voluntary poverty is of counsel; it is not obligatory; but to be perfect one must have at least the spirit of the counsel, the spirit of detachment in the midst even of riches, if one keeps them.

St. Francis de Sales[13] develops this teaching, saying that voluntary poverty is a great good, but one which is little known; that it is a principle of happiness; that it must be observed in the midst of wealth and also in real poverty, if we should happen to lose everything.

> Now if you love the poor, be often in their company, be glad to see them in your house, and to visit them in theirs. Converse willingly with them, be pleased to have them near you in the church, in the streets, and elsewhere. . . . Make yourself then a servant of the poor: go and serve them in their beds when they are sick . . . at your own expense. . . . This service is more glorious than a kingdom. . . . St. Louis frequently served at table the poor whom he supported, and caused three poor men to dine with him almost every day, and many times ate the remainder of their food with an incomparable love. When he visited the hospitals, . . . he commonly served . . . such as had the most loathsome diseases, kneeling on the ground, respecting in their persons the Savior of the world. . . . St. Elizabeth, daughter of the King of Hungary, often visited the poor. . . . But should you meet with losses which impoverish you . . . as in the case of tempests, fires, inundations, . . . lawsuits, then is the proper season to practice poverty . . . with meekness . . . and patience.[14]

[12] Mark 10: 21 f.
[13] *Introduction to a Devout Life,* Part III, chaps. 14-16.
[14] *Ibid.,* chap. 15.

St. Francis de Sales adds that truly Christian poverty should be gay, and that he who has chosen it should not seek his comfort, but should suffer some discomforts for the love of God; otherwise, how would this virtue be for him a means of union with God? The examples of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic, and St. Benedict Joseph Labre, show us to what close union with God this virtue can lead us when practiced for love of God.

The Fruitfulness of Voluntary Poverty

St. Thomas [15] tells us that Christ willed to be poor for four reasons: (i) because voluntary poverty is fitting for the preacher, who should be freed from the care of earthly goods; (2) because He wished to show that He desires only the salvation of souls; (3) that He might lead us to desire especially eternal goods; (4) that divine power which saves souls might stand forth more clearly in the absence of human helps. This is also the reason why Christ chose poor fishermen of Galilee as His apostles. Thus is demonstrated the fruitfulness of voluntary poverty; it is the hundredfold promised by Christ.

In the first place, the spirit of poverty frees us from excessive preoccupation about exterior goods, which are then no longer an obstacle in our progress toward God, but a means of doing good. Thus delivered, the Christian may run the way of perfection; he no longer thinks of settling down on earth as if he were to remain there always, for he understands that he is there only temporarily. He is no longer embarrassed, as it were, by useless baggage in his journey toward eternity; aware of being a traveler, a *viator,* he aspires to reach his last end without delay. His pace is even quickened, becomes ever more rapid, because he is always more drawn by the last end in proportion as he approaches it.

In the second place, voluntary poverty is a sign of disinterestedness, particularly necessary for an apostle; for it should be evident he has no interest but that of winning souls for our Lord, as St. Dominic told the prelates who arrived in Languedoc with a whole suite to preach the Gospel to people seduced by the errors of the Albigenses. These prelates understood then that they should preach

*·Cf. Illa, q.40, a.3; q.35, a.7.

first by example, by true detachment; and they sent away their retinue.

In the third place, voluntary poverty is materially fruitful in a degree that sometimes borders on the miraculous. To see this fact, one need only visit certain convents dedicated to the care of the poor, such as the homes of the Little Sisters of the Poor, or the *piccola casa* of St. Joseph Cottolengo in Turin, "a little house" which shelters ten thousand indigent sick, and which subsists only on the alms received from day to day. It is like a perpetual miracle worked by divine Providence in response to the trust of the holy founder and his sons, who understood the profound meaning of Christ's words: "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." [16] These servants of the poor live by the supernatural contemplation of this truth and by its practice.

Fourthly, more admirable still is the spiritual fruitfulness of the spirit of poverty. It teaches us patience, humility, detachment in regard to higher goods, to all that is not God and the love of God, that is, in respect to the goods of the intellect, of the heart, and of certain goods of the soul.

The goods of the intellect are our knowledge, our talents if we have any. In study we must know how to avoid curiosity, vainglory, useless natural eagerness; how to place this study truly at the service of God, detaching ourselves from our own lights, from our excessively personal views. If we do this, the Lord will in this case also give us the hundredfold: a superior simplicity, that of true contemplation, which forgets itself in order to lose itself in its object. St. Albert the Great practiced this spirit of poverty in respect to the immense learning he had acquired. He was told that he would lose the use of his memory; this took place, and during the rather long period of life that was left to him, he remained as if completely absorbed in the contemplation of God. In place of the acquired learning that he had lost, he received a very superior treasure, a lofty degree of infused contemplation that he might live most profoundly by the mysteries of salvation.

The goods of the heart are our affections, and also the affection full of esteem and confidence that others show us. We must live in a certain detachment in regard even to these goods that we may

w Matt. 6:33.

not fall into sentimentalism. We must not cling to being loved, esteemed; we must also consecrate our legitimate affections to God, placing them under the influx of true charity, which will reveal to us what a treasure is a truly supernatural friendship that is wholly generous. It is a great gift of God, which He occasionally grants to those who have renounced all.

Finally, the spirit of poverty also teaches us to practice detachment from certain goods of the soul, that is, spiritual consolations. They must certainly not be sought for themselves; were this done, they would cease to be a means of progress toward God and would become an obstacle. We must consent to be weaned from them when the Lord judges it to be for our good. Following the advice of St. Grignion de Montfort, many interior souls strip themselves of all that is communicable to others in their prayers and good works and entrust it to the Blessed Virgin that she may use ir to the best advantage of souls on earth or in purgatory in greatest need of it. By this denudation the Christian prepares himself for a higher spiritual poverty, which is a great gift of God and recalls the destitution of Christ on the cross, abandoned by His people, by many of His own, and to all appearances abandoned by His Father. Interior souls find this higher spiritual poverty in the last purification which St. John of the Cross calls the dark night of the soul. Victim souls experience more profoundly than others this absolute stripping of themselves and this immolation which configures them to Christ that they may obtain the salvation of sinners.

Thus, in different degrees, the spirit of poverty and still more voluntary poverty effectively practiced for love of God, enrich the Christian while stripping him and obtain the hundredfold for him. Such is the lofty meaning of the evangelical beatitude: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The Merit of the Vows

With St. Thomas [17] we must add that it is more meritorious to perform a good act with a vow than without, and this for three reasons: (i) because the vow is an act of the virtue of religion, or of the worship of latria. This virtue is the most noble of the moral virtues; hence it renders more meritorious the acts of poverty, chastity,

[17] Cf. IIa IIae, q.88, a.6.

and obedience which it inspires, commands, and offers to God as a holocaust.

Moreover, charity itself inspires the vow; it is made out of love and is a true testimony of love that is at times highly meritorious. If anyone greatly loves another, he places himself at the other's service out of affection. Thus the soul that wishes to love God greatly places itself forever at His service out of love, binding itself to Him by a vow. It has been objected that he who is already closely united to God through charity, the highest of the virtues, does not find an additional perfection in binding himself to God by a vow. If he is already a friend, he does not have to become a servant; so much so that our Lord said: "I will not now call you servants. . . . But I have called you friends." The answer to this objection is that he who loves God finds an additional perfection in placing himself through love at God's service for his entire life.[18]

St. Thomas adds two other reasons: (2) he who promises God a succession of good works and accomplishes them subjects himself more to God than if he accomplished them without having promised them. Thus he who gives the tree and its fruits offers more than if he offered only the fruits while retaining possession of the tree. (3) Lastly, by the vow the will is immutably fixed in the good, which is an additional perfection.

Consequently it is evident that the vows of religion, especially perpetual and solemn vows, add to the acts of poverty, chastity, and obedience, an additional merit, that of the virtue of religion, which is itself offered to God as worship by charity that inspires all the other virtues. The soul consecrated to the Lord thus belongs more intimately to Him.

[18] This superior influence of love is manifested also in the fact that interior worship excels exterior worship. It is more perfect to offer God our acts of faith, hope, and love, than exterior acts. The theological virtues inspire the virtue of religion, which through love thus renders the worship due to God. Cf. IIa IIae, q.81, a.5 ad mm.

CHAPTER XV

The Grandeur of Obedience

OBEDIENCE is the highest of the three evangelical counsels, just as the pride of life is in itself a graver disorder than the concupiscence of the flesh and that of the eyes. Pride, which was the sin of the rebellious angel and of the first man, is the source of all deviations because it turns us away from God to put our trust in ourselves. In this sense it is a more serious sin than other more shameful sins which incline us toward vile things, but which turn us less directly away from God.[1] Cold, hard pride, which leads man to refuse to adhere to the word of God or to obey Him, is a more serious sin than inordinate attachment to the pleasures of the senses or to earthly goods. For this reason Christ said to the Pharisees who were led astray by their pride: "Amen I say to you, that the publicans and the harlots shall go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of justice, and you did not believe him. But the publicans and the harlots believed him: but you, seeing it, did not even afterwards repent, that you might believe him." [2]

We know these things theoretically, but in practice we forget them. We think more readily of the manifest disorders which arise from the concupiscence of the flesh or from that of the eyes, and we do not adequately recognize that the great sin is the sin of him who said: "Now *serviam,* I will not serve." This is the principal sin of the world that calls itself "modern," while claiming to separate itself from the Church. It still desires indeed to repress gross instincts, to struggle against avarice, to labor for the amelioration of

[1] Cf. St. Thomas, la Ilae, q. 73, a.5: "Spiritual sins are of greater guilt than carnal sins. . . . Spiritual sin denotes more a turning away from something (from God), whence the notion of guilt arises."

[*] Matt. 21:31 f.

the lot of the working class, but it intends to do all this by itself, without the help of God, of our Lord, and of the Church. Only too often it wishes to obey only its own reason, its own judgment, its own will, and this rationalism leads it to disobey reason rather than to obey God. Its own reason leads it, like the prodigal son, into dishonorable, debasing servitude, occasionally into real tyranny, that of rebellious popular passions and that of criminal, unjust laws, put into effect in spite of the protests of conscience, in the interest of the party in power. Obedience to the commandments of God and of the Church would free society from these servitudes which oppress the best and lead society into disorder, confusion, and ruin. Such an evil can be cured only by a holy reaction in the direction of profound, humble, Christian obedience. Yet the grandeur of obedience, even in relatively good circles, is too often misunderstood.[3]

The better to see the value of this virtue, we shall consider first of all from what servitude it delivers us and what are its spiritual fruits with regard to union with God.

[*] A contemplative religious wrote to us recently as follows:

"In our days people have often lost sight of the intrinsic value of religious profession. They no longer see how the great vows chiefly uplift intrinsically the whole of religious life. This profound and superior idea is exiled; it no longer finds a milieu to understand it. Very frequently people think only superficially and extrinsically about this fundamental idea. The influence of the great theology of the Middle Ages has lost its dominion. For this great error, casuists, who have materialized the concept of religious life, are responsible. Under the pretext of avoiding sin, they have considered everything from a negative point of view. Religious obedience has lost its profound meaning. The vows of poverty and chastity, which are more frequently transgressed, and often mortally, have in fact come to the foreground in several manuals; whereas obedience, which is the foundation of the whole edifice, has been placed in the background, because it is rare that disobedience is a mortal sin.

"They have thus actually reversed supernatural values. In many centers this condition of affairs has become a general state of mind. The positive and profound value of religious immolation by the vows, the complete domination of the religious life and of its activity by the virtues of religion and obedience, which render the existence of a religious something 'sacred,' has been lost sight of. As a consequence, they no longer see the intrinsic value of the religious life, and some have remarked that this deficiency often works on vocations like a 'fatal corrosive.' For many, obedience is no longer anything but a 'discipline,' an 'exterior religious observance,' a professional practice which one can personally sublimate if one is noble-hearted, as a soldier or a clerk can sublimate the practices of his profession or his position."

The Type of Servitude from Which Obedience Delivers Us

Obedience delivers us from a twofold slavery: that of self-will and that of our own judgment.

Obedience to God, to His spiritual and temporal representatives, daily assures the conformity of our will with the divine will.[4] It thus delivers us from self-will, that is, from a will which is not conformed to that of God, and which through pride goes astray, acting contrary to the current of grace and refusing to act in the true direction.

Self-will thus defined is the source of every sin. For this reason St. Bernard says: "Take away self-will, and there will no longer be any hell." Self-will is particularly dangerous because it can corrupt everything. Even what is best in man becomes evil when self-will enters in, for it takes itself as its end instead of subordinating itself to God. If the Lord sees that it inspires a fast, a penance, a sacrifice, He rejects them as Pharisaical works accomplished through pride in order to make oneself esteemed. Without going that far, we must admit that we cling greatly to our own will. Occasionally we hold to our way of doing good more than to the good itself; we wish it to be done, but by ourselves and in our way. When this egoism becomes collective, it may be called *esprit de corps,* a corruption of family spirit; it is the source of a great many unpleasantnesses, partialities, defamations. Sometimes a certain group wishes to promote a good work, or it hinders one from being developed. It is like wishing to smother a child who seems to be one too many, when as a matter of fact it may become the honor of the family. Evidently such a course of action can only displease the Lord.

In religion, the vow of obedience assures the mortification of this

[4] The formal motive of obedience is not that the thing commanded seems reasonable in itself, but that it is commanded by a legitimate superior, the spiritual or temporal representative of God, from whom comes all power to command. If a man obeyed solely because the thing commanded seemed to him essentially reasonable and prudent according to his own judgment, he would lose the merit proper to obedience, as one would lose that of faith if one accepted only evident revealed truths because of their evidence. The formal motive of faith is the authority of God who reveals mysteries that remain obscure. The specific object of obedience, says St. Thomas, "is a command tacit or express, because the superior's will, however it becomes known, is a tacit precept" (IIa IIae, q. 104, a.2, c. and ad jum).

dangerous self-will which turns the soul away from salvation. That it may control self-will, the vow must be practiced with a spirit of faith, seeing in the orders of superiors, in spite of their imperfections or defects, orders given by God, from whom all power comes. Religious obedience should be prompt and universal: that is, it should extend alike to little and great things; it should obey all legitimate superiors, whether they be amiable or not, particularly prudent or less enlightened, holy or less perfect, because it is always God who speaks, as long as the order given is not contrary to a higher law and does not exceed the limits of the constitutions which the religious promised to observe. Such obedience is a deliverance, for it assures from day to day the conformity of man's will with God's will, and by that very fact it greatly fortifies the will while rectifying it.

Obedience delivers us also from the servitude of our own judgment, that is, from an excessively subjective judgment not sufficiently founded on truth, not conformed to the judgment of God. Our own personal judgment is in this sense the source of singularity in conduct and stubbornness which leads to nothing and impedes the good which others wish to do. It is a hasty judgment springing from our prejudices, our evil dispositions, our self-love, our pride. Occasionally the enemy of our soul is the one who suggests it to us or confirms it when we ourselves have already formed it. Following Aristotle, St. Thomas often says: "According as we are well or ill disposed in our will and sensible faculties, a given end seems good or evil to us." The proud man judges that what flatters his pride is excellent, whereas the humble man judges that humiliation is good for him.

Our own judgment often leads to rash judgment, contrary to justice and charity. In it there is servitude, slavery; we are the slaves of our egoistic prejudices, and they lead us away from salvation and union with God.

Obedience delivers us from this slavery by assuring the conformity of our practical judgment with that of the representative of God, who has the right to give us an order in His name.§ It may be that this representative of God is mistaken on some point or other; he

§Obedience demands the conformity of the practical judgment (which immediately directs voluntary choice) to the order given. The thing commanded, materially considered in itself, may be at times imprudent, inoppor-

is not infallible like the pope speaking *ex cathedra,* but as long as the order given is not manifestly contrary to a higher law and does not exceed the powers of the one who commands, we are obliged to obey, and our practical judgment is not deceived in obeying. Sometimes the messenger of Providence may limp, but he is still God's messenger; he brings us a letter or an order of divine origin.

The effective practice of the counsel of obedience is found especially in the religious life; it is a much surer road for reaching perfection more rapidly by progressive conformity to the will of God even in the depths of our will and the details of daily life.

But we must at least have the spirit of the counsel actually to reach Christian perfection, that is, the spirit of detachment from self-will to which we cling. As a child should obey his father, his mother, and the teachers who train him, every Christian should obey all who are for him the spiritual or temporal representatives of God. There is the obedience of the wife to her husband, that of the soldier to his leaders, of the servant to his master, of every subordinate to his superiors, of every Christian to the Church and to the constituted authorities in the Church. If this obedience is practiced, not merely in a servile, mechanical, exterior manner, but in the spirit of faith, it greatly forms the will, renders it flexible, and fortifies it while subordinating it daily a little better to the will of God, of the living God who vivifies us. It is well to recall often that "there is no power but from God,"[6] that one cannot obey an equal, but only a superior, and that, in short, it is God who is obeyed.

Similarly we must obey events so far as they are signs of the divine will. Theology teaches that the divine will is manifested to us not only by the precepts and the counsels, but also by events willed

tune; obedience does not then demand its approval as such by a speculative judgment (another superior in a few months will perhaps see the thing in a different light). In this case, let us leave the thing commanded for what it is materially in itself, and consider only that it is formally commanded to us, here and now, and commanded by God, in spite of the imperfection of His messenger. At this moment, it is what we should do, and even if the superior is mistaken, we are not mistaken practically in obeying him. The superior of Margaret Mary Alacoque sometimes sent the fervent religious, during the period set aside for the community meditation, to keep watch over a donkey in a meadow in order to prove her obedience. The religious obeyed and certainly made a better meditation in the meadow than she would have made in choir if she had wished to go there contrary to the will of her superior.

• Rom. 13:1.

or at least permitted by God.[7] Nothing, in fact, happens unless God has willed it (if it is a good), or permitted it (if it is an evil). To be perfect our obedience should take into consideration these signs of the will of God. For example, legitimate success in an examination gives us a position that makes possible for us the accomplishment of a more extended good; let us not compromise this good by imprudent or cowardly acts. On the contrary, we are humiliated by a failure, or by an illness, which sometimes show us that the way we are engaged in is not what God wishes for us.

There are particularly significant events which, from the temporal point of view, change the situation of a family or the organization of society. We must know how to draw the greatest spiritual profit from them and not wish at any cost to revert to an order of things which was useful in the past and which probably is no longer willed by God in the period in which we are living. One does not go back up the course of fife or that of history; the old man does not return to adolescence; and our century cannot return to what existed in the thirteenth, though it should seek to profit by all the good handed down by past ages in order to prepare a future in which God truly reigns.

In all these forms of obedience to all that manifests the will of God, in obedience to the duty of the present moment from minute to minute, the Christian ought always to have before his eyes as his model the Savior, who was "obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross." [8] Thus the martyrs and all the saints obeyed, finding their joy in dying to self-will that they might feed on that of God according to the Savior's words: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." [9]

The Fruits of Obedience

To comprehend the grandeur and the fruits of obedience, we should remember that it is more perfect to offer God one's will and judgment than to offer Him exterior goods through voluntary poverty, or one's body and heart through chastity.[10] It is also more per-

[7] Cf. St. Thomas, Ia, q.19, a. 12: "Five expressions of the divine will: prohibition, precept, counsel, operation, permission."

[8] Phil. 2:8.

[9] John 4:34.

[10] Cf. IIa IIae, q. 104, a.3, c. and ad mm.

feet to offer Him one's will than to sacrifice to Him exteriorly a lamb or a dove, as was done in the sacrifices of the Old Testament. With this meaning, Scripture says: "Obedience is better than sacrifices: and to hearken rather than to offer the fat of rams." [11]

The fruits of obedience are chiefly the following: it gives a great rectitude of judgment, great strength of will, the highest liberty of spirit.

The greatest rectitude of judgment comes from the fact that obedience makes us participate in the very wisdom of God; it renders us more wise than the wisest, more prudent than the ancients: *Super senes intellexi.* In the most difficult and the most complicated situations, it brings us the solution that is practically true for us here and now. Practically, we do not make a mistake in obeying, even if the superior is mistaken. By humble obedience a simple lay brother, Blessed Martin de Porres of Peru, did more for his country than statesmen who do not think of praying to obtain light.

As a reward for fidelity, perfect obedience obtains from the Holy Ghost, even here on earth, the inspirations of the gift of counsel that direct us in the most hidden things of the spirit which a director or a superior could not state precisely and which our prudence could not succeed in settling properly. The gift of counsel is particularly necessary for those whose duty it is to command, that they may do so supernaturally; for this reason if a man does not begin by obeying well, he will never know how to command. God gives His lights to the obedient.

Obedience also gives great strength of will. Naturalism declares at times that obedience weakens the will; on the contrary, it strengthens the will tenfold. When, in fact, there is no reason to doubt that an order comes from God through the intermediary of a legitimate superior, it is also certain that by divine grace the fulfillment of this order is possible. As St. Augustine says: "God, in fact, never commands the impossible; but He tells us to do what we are able and to ask Him for the grace to accomplish what we cannot do of ourselves." [12] Therefore St. Augustine used to pray: "Lord, give me the strength to accomplish what Thou dost command, and command what Thou dost wish."

[11] Cf. I Kings 15:22.

[11] St. Augustine, *De natura et gratia,* chap. 43. These words are quoted by the Council of Trent, Sess. VI, chap. 11.

Because God never commands the impossible, when in certain circumstances martyrdom is of precept, in the sense that it must be undergone rather than deny the faith, God gives the strength to obey, to be faithful to Him in the midst of torture; and He gives this strength even to children, to young virgins, like St. Agnes, or to old men weakened by age. In such cases especially are realized the words of Scripture: "An obedient man shall speak of victory." [13]

Without going as far as marytrdom, obedience works prodigies. We need only cite the example of the first sixteen sons of St. Dominic. Strong in the Pope's blessing, the holy founder sent them from Toulouse into various parts of Europe to found convents and to carry on the apostolate. Having no money to give them, the saint said to them: "You shall beg your food; I will pray for you three times a day. I promise you that, in spite of the distress of poverty, you will never lack what is necessary." The sixteen religious, trusting in the words of their Father, obeyed; they left joyfully like the first apostles, and were not slow in multiplying in Italy, Spain, England, even in faraway Poland, and among the infidels of the Orient whom they went to evangelize. This example and many others confirm the grandeur of obedience. When an order is given, and there is no doubt but that it comes from God, the grace which makes its fulfillment possible is most certainly bestowed. If a person prays to be faithful to this grace and not to resist it, he accomplishes the command not without difficulty sometimes, but he accomplishes it.

Finally, obedience, far from being a servitude, bestows the highest liberty, that of the children of God, as voluntary poverty gives true spiritual riches, as perfect charity obtains the intimacy of the love of God. A French author, Alfred de Vigny, wrote a beautiful book on the life of a soldier; it is entitled, *Servitude et grandeur militaires;* in perfect Christian obedience there are a servitude and a superior grandeur that are truly supernatural. Of this obedience St. Paul speaks when he reminds us that we should desire to be "de-

[13] Prov. 21:28. In this connection we are reminded of the group of martyrs who died singing the *Te Deum.* As they saw the preachers of the faith approaching, they sang in a higher tone: *Te gloriosus apostolorum chorus;* to which the preachers who were also going to be martyred, responded: *Te martyrum candidatus laudat exercitus.* This song recalls the words of St. Ignatius of Antioch, who on hearing the lions that were about to devour him, exclaimed: "I am the wheat of Christ. I shall be ground by the teeth of beasts that I may become the bread of the world."

livered from the servitude of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God";[14] "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,"[15] that is to say, deliverance, for divine truth delivers the soul from error. Injecting truth into life, obedience sets man free from the prejudices of the world, from its maxims, modes, and infatuations. It frees him from excessive preoccupation about the judgment of men, from concern about what people will say, instead of doing good and letting them talk. Obedience delivers him from his doubts, hesitations, and anxieties. It simplifies life while elevating it. With it liberty grows, for in man liberty comes from the intellect, and the more enlightened his intellect is, the more free he is. The more man understands that God is the sovereign Good, the freer he is not to respond to the attraction of earthly goods, and the stronger he is against the threats of the impious. Who was freer than the martyrs? Through love and obedience they freely gave their blood in witness of divine truth, and neither iron nor fire could force an abjuration from them. They obeyed in a spirit of faith and for love of God, like the Savior, who was obedient "unto death, even to the death of the cross."

The grandeur of obedience is expressed in this frequently quoted, holy expression: "To serve God is to reign," that is, to reign over one's passions, over the spirit of the world, over the enemy of souls and his suggestions; it is to reign in the very kingdom of God and, so to speak, to share in His independence toward all created things. It is to place oneself like a docile instrument in His hands for all that He wishes, following out St. Augustine's words which we have already quoted: "Lord, give me the strength to accomplish what Thou dost command, and command what Thou dost wish."

Of a certainty obedience thus understood prepares for the contemplation of divine things; it prepares us to see the will of God or His permission in all pleasurable or painful events, and it helps us to understand "that to them that love God [and persevere in His love], all things work together unto good."

[14] Rom. 8:21.
[15] Cf. II Cor. 3:17.

CHAPTER XVI

Simplicity and Uprightness

"If thy eye be single, thy
whole body shall be lightsome."
Matt. 6:22

CHRISTIAN prudence or holy discretion, of which we have spoken, should be accompanied by a virtue, simplicity, which is to all appearances quite different. Christ Himself expressed this when He said to His apostles: "Behold I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents and simple as doves." [1]

Sending His apostles as sheep in the midst of wolves, Christ recommends to them prudence especially toward the wicked, that they may not be deceived by them, and simplicity in reference to self and to God. The more simple the soul is in regard to God, the more He Himself, by the gift of counsel, will inspire rhe prudence to be observed in difficult circumstances, in the midst of the greatest obstacles. Consequently Christ announces immediately afterward to His followers that the Holy Ghost will inspire them with what they must reply to persecutors.

Where this simplicity does not exist, prudence begins to become false and to turn into cunning. The crafty or the shrewd man makes sport, says Holy Scripture, of the simplicity of the just: "The simplicity of the just man is laughed to scorn," says Job.[2] People try to make simplicity pass for naïveté and lack of penetration; it may indeed be accompanied in some by artlessness, but it is essentially something superior.

To ger a correct idea of the virtue of simplicity and of veracity

[1] Matt. 10:16.
[2] Job 12:4.

and uprightness which it makes us preserve, we should note first of all the defects opposed to it. God permits evil only for a greater good, in particular to bring virtue into greater relief. We have a better understanding of its value through the aversion inspired in us by the contrary vices.

Defects Opposed to Simplicity

According to St. Thomas,§ simplicity is attached to the virtue of veracity, which puts truth into speech, gestures, manner of being and of living. Simplicity, in fact, is opposed to duplicity, by which we interiorly wish something other than what exteriorly we pretend. A man wishes other people's money and pretends to render them service; in reality, he wishes to make use of them or of what belongs to them; or again, he wishes power and honors, and to obtain them pretends to serve his country; he pretends to be magnanimous, when in reality he is only ambitious. This defect of duplicity, which may become Machiavellianism or perfidy, inclines a man to be two-faced, according to the people he is addressing, like the Roman god Janus that was represented with two faces. A two-faced man pretends to be your friend, tells you that you are right, and he tells your adversaries that they are not wrong.

Duplicity inspires lies, simulation, which leads a man to make himself esteemed for something other than he is, hypocrisy, by which he affects a virtue, a piety which he does not have. It also inspires boasting, because one prefers appearance to reality; one seeks to appear rather than to be what one should. It also inspires raillery, which turns others into ridicule in order to lower them in their neighbor's esteem and to exalt oneself above them.

* Cf. Ila Ilae, q. 109, a. 2 ad 4UIT1: "Simplicity is so called from its opposition to duplicity, whereby a man shows one thing outwardly while having another in his heart: so that simplicity pertains to this virtue. And it rectifies the intention, not indeed directly (since this belongs to every virtue), but by excluding duplicity, whereby a man pretends one thing and intends another."

Cf. *ibid.,* q.in, a.3 ad mm: "Wherefore it belongs directly to simplicity to guard oneself from deception, and in this way the virtue of simplicity is the same as the virtue of truth. . . . There is, however, a more logical difference between them, because by truth we mean the concordance between sign and thing signified, while simplicity indicates that one does not tend to different things, by intending one thing inwardly, and pretending another outwardly." It is a virtue annexed to justice. *Ibid.,* q. 109, a. 3.

All these defects, which are frequent in the world, show by contrast the value of uprightness or veracity in life.

Veracity and the Interior Like

Veracity, a virtue attached to justice, leads a man to tell the truth always and to act in conformity with it. This does not mean that every truth should be told to everybody, sermonizing right and left and boasting of a frankness which borders on insolence or lack of respect. But if every truth is not to be told, if there are truths which it is expedient to suppress, we should avoid speaking against the truth and falling into an officious lie, which we are tempted to tell in order to escape from an embarrassing situation. If we have committed this sin, we must accuse ourselves frankly of it, instead of seeking by false principles to justify this manner of acting. Thus to act would gradually bring about the loss of all loyalty and would destroy all confidence in human testimony, which is indispensable to the life of society.

It is indeed difficult at times, when faced with an indiscreet question, to keep a secret which has been entrusted to one and at the same time not to speak contrary to the truth.[4] But if the Christian is habitually docile to the inspirations from above, the Holy Ghost will inspire him in such difficult circumstances as these with the reply to make or the question to ask, as He did the first Christians when they were led before the tribunals. Christ foretold this when He said: "When they shall deliver you up, take no thought how or what to speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what to speak. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you."[5] This prediction was often verified during the French Revolution when priests were hunted down and when, to prevent them from bringing the last sacraments to the dying, they were asked all sorts of insidious questions. The Holy Ghost often inspired their answers, which, though not opposed to the truth, permitted them to continue their ministry.

Every Christian in the state of grace has the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, which render him docile to receive His inspirations,

4 Let us remember, moreover, that often it is our own fault if we are asked indiscreet questions. If we were more recollected and silent, people would not ask them of us, or at least they would do so only rarely.

5 Matt, 10: 19 f.

given especially in difficult circumstances where even our infused prudence is insufficient. St. Thomas says even that for this reason the gifts of the Holy Ghost are necessary to salvation as the complement of the infused virtues.® The casuists should have remembered this great truth instead of having recourse to theories that occasionally were hazardous, in order to permit certain mental restrictions which were so slightly manifest that they bordered singularly on falsehood. It is better to recognize that one has committed a venial sin of lying than to have recourse to theories which falsify the definition of a lie, in order not to admit it there where it is. It is of great importance to preserve the spirit of uprightness of which our Lord speaks when He says: "Let your speech be yea, yea: no, no: and that which is over and above these, is of evil." 7 He spoke in this manner to those who, in order to make their testimony believed, swore without reason by heaven or by the temple at Jerusalem. Disrespectful oaths expose one to perjury; if a man is accustomed always to tell the truth, others will believe his speech.

In treating of veracity, St. Thomas makes a remark which particularly concerns the interior life. This virtue, he says,8 inclines a man to keep silent about his own qualities, or not to manifest the whole good that is in him; this is done without prejudice to the truth, since not to speak of it, is not to deny its existence. St. Thomas even quotes on the subject the following reflection of Aristotle: "Those who represent themselves as being greater than they are, are a source of annoyance to others, since they seem to wish to surpass others: whereas those who make less account of themselves are a source of pleasure, since they seem to defer to others by their moderation."9 St. Paul also says: "For though I should have a mind to glory, I shall not be foolish; for I will say the truth. But I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth in me, or anything he heareth from me." 10

The virtue of veracity thus practiced, not only in speech but in action, in our whole way of living, brings truth into our lives. And when our life is established in the truth, then God, who is supreme Truth, inclines toward us by His divine inspirations, which gradu-

• Cf. la Ilae, q.68, a. a.
7 Matt. 5:37.
' Cf. Ila Ilae, q. 109, a.4.
0 *Ethica,* IV, chap. 7.
10 Cf. II Cor. 12:6.

ally become the principle of a higher contemplation. To let ourselves fall into the habit of lying is to turn away from the truth and to deprive ourselves of the higher inspirations of the gift of wisdom. Habitual living in the truth prepares us to receive these inspirations, which make us penetrate and taste divine truth that we shall some day contemplate unveiled.

Superior Simplicity, the Image of That of God

Another aspect of veracity, the superior simplicity of the saints, prepares the soul even more for contemplation. Simplicity is opposed not only to duplicity, but to every useless complexity, to all that is pretentious or tainted with affectation, like sentimentality which affects a love that one does not have. What falsity to wish to talk in a glowing style as if one were already in the seventh mansion of the interior castle, when one has not yet entered the fourth! How far superior is the simplicity of the Gospel!

We say that a child's gaze is simple because the child goes straight to the point without any mental reservation. With this meaning Christ says to us: "If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome"; that is, if our intention is upright and simple, our whole life will be one, true, and luminous, instead of being divided like that of those who try to serve two masters, God and money, at the same time. In the presence of the complexities, the pretenses, the more or less untruthful complications of the world, we feel instinctively that the moral virtue of simplicity or of perfect loyalty is a reflection of a divine perfection.

The simplicity of God is that of the pure Spirit who is Truth itself and Goodness itself. In Him are no thoughts that succeed one another; there is but one thought, ever the same, which subsists and embraces every truth. The simplicity of His intellect is that of a most pure gaze which, without any admixture of error or ignorance, has unchangeably as its object every knowable truth. The simplicity of His will or of His love is that of a sovereignly pure intention ordering all things admirably and permitting evil only for a greater good.

The most beautiful characteristic of God's simplicity is that it unites in itself perfections which in appearance are most contradictory: absolute immutability and absolute liberty; infinite wis-

dom and the freest good pleasure, which at times seems arbitrary to us; or again infinite justice, which is inexorable toward unrepented sin, and infinite mercy. All these perfections are fused and identified without destroying each other in the eminent simplicity of God.

We find a reflection of this lofty simplicity in the smile of a child and in the simplicity of the gaze of the saints, which is far superior to all the more or less untruthful intricacies of worldly wisdom and prudence.

What a false notion of simplicity we sometimes form when we imagine that it consists in telling frankly all that passes through our

to the next, when circumstances will have changed and the persons whom we see will have ceased to please us! This quasi-simplicity is instability itself and contradiction, and consequently complexity and more or less conscious untruth; whereas the superior simplicity of the saints, the image of that of God, is the simplicity of an unchanging wisdom and of a pure and strong love, superior to our impressionability and successive opinions.

St. Francis de Sales often speaks of simplicity.[1] He reduces it to the upright intention of the love of God, which should prevail over all our sentiments, and which does not tarry over the useless search for a quantity of exercises that would make us lose sight of the unity of the end to be attained. He says also that simplicity is the best of artifices because it goes straight toward its goal. He adds that it is not opposed to prudence, and that it does not interfere with what others do.

The perfect soul is thus a simplified soul, which reaches the point of judging everything, not according to the subjective impression of the moment, but in the divine light, and of willing things only for God. And whereas the complex soul, which judges according to its whims, is disturbed for a trifle, the simplified soul is in a constant state of peace because of its wisdom and its love. This superior simplicity, which is quite different from naïveté, or ingenuousness, harmonizes perfectly, therefore, with the most cautious Christian prudence that is attentive to the least details of our acts and to their proximate or remote repercussion.

The soul of a St. Joseph, a St. John, a St. Francis, a St. Dominic,

[1] *Introduction to a Devout Life,* Part III, chap. 30.

or a Curé of Ars gives us an idea of the simplicity of God; still more so does the soul of Mary, Morning Star, Queen of virgins and of all saints, Queen of peace. Higher still the holy soul of Christ reflects most purely the simplicity of God.

In Christ we find harmonized in a simple way the holy rigor of justice toward the hypocritical Pharisees and immense mercy toward all souls of which He is the Good Shepherd. In Him are united in the simplest manner the deepest humility and the loftiest dignity. For thirty years He lived the hidden life of a poor workman; He tells us that He came to serve, not to be served. On Holy Thursday He washed the feet of His disciples; He accepted the utmost humiliations of the Passion; He said simply to His Father: "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." [12] Before Pilate He proclaims simply His universal royalty: "My kingdom is not of this world. . . . Thou sayest that I am a king. For this was I born, and for this came I into the world; that I should give testimony to the truth. Every one that is of the truth, heareth My voice." [13] He dies simply, saying: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit. . . . It is consummated." [14] In this simplicity is such grandeur that the centurion, seeing Him die, could not refrain from exclaiming: "Indeed this was the Son of God." [15]

The centurion had the gaze of a contemplative; he sensed in the dying Christ, who seemed to be definitively conquered, Him who was winning the greatest victory over sin, the devil, and death. This light of contemplation was given to him by the dying Christ, by the Savior, who inclines more particularly toward the simple who are clean of heart.

This superior simplicity, even in souls without learning, is a preparation for the profound understanding of divine things. The Old Testament had already declared: "Seek Him [the Lord] in simplicity of heart." [18] "Better is the poor man that walketh in his simplicity, than a rich man that is perverse in his lips." [17] "Let us all

12 Matt. 26:39.
12 John 18:36 f.
14 Luke 23:46; John 19:30.
12 Matt. 27:54.
ieWisd. 1:1.
1T Prov. 19: i.

die in our innocency," [18] said the Machabees, under the injustice which afflicted them. "Obey," says St. Paul, . . . "in simplicity of heart." [19] And he exhorts the Corinthians to beware lest they "fall from the simplicity that is in Christ." [20] Simplicity must be observed toward God, superiors, and self. It is the truth of life.

This simplicity, says Bossuet,[21] is what permits limpid souls "to enter the heights of God," the ways of Providence, the unsearchable mysteries at which complex souls take scandal, the mysteries of the infinite justice, the infinite mercy, and the sovereign liberty of the divine good pleasure. All these mysteries, despite their obscurity, are in their loftiness simple for the simple.

Wby are these mysteries simple for some and obscure for others? The answer lies in the fact that in divine things the most simple, like the Our Father, are also the loftiest and the most profound. We forget this fact because the inverse is true in the things of the world, in which good and evil are intimately mingled. Hence they are often very complex, and then he who wishes to be simple in this domain lacks penetration; he remains naïve, ingenuous, and superficial. In divine things, on the contrary, simplicity is united to depth and elevation, for divine things that are highest in God and deepest in our hearts are simplicity itself.

We have an example in the profound simplicity of the Blessed Virgin Mary and also in that of St. Joseph, who, after our Lord and Mary, was the most eminently simple and contemplative soul the world has ever seen. His simplicity was the effect of his unique predestination as foster father of the Savior together with the habits of life of a humble carpenter. Leo XIII, in his encyclical on the Patronage of St. Joseph, says: "There is no doubt that more than anyone he approached that supereminent dignity by which the Mother of God so highly surpasses all creatures." [22]

St. Thomas Aquinas also had in a very eminent degree the virtue

18 Cf. I Mach. 2:37.

19Col. 3:22.

20Cf. II Cor. 11:3.

21 Cf. *Elévations sur les mystères,* i8° semaine: les élévations sur les paroles du vieillard Siméon.

22 Encyclical *Quanquam pluries,* August 15, 1899: "Ad illam praestantissimam dignitatem, qua naturis creatis omnibus longissime Deipara antecellit, *non est dubium quin accesserit ipse, ut nemo rnagis."*

of simplicity, which is an aspect of veracity, of the truth of life.

In recent times God has given us a lofty example of the simplicity of the saints united to the contemplation of the mysteries of faith in the person of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus.[23] She says: "Far from resembling those beautiful souls who, from their childhood, practiced all sorts of macerations, I made mine consist solely in breaking my will, in withholding an answer, in rendering little services without drawing attention to them, and many other things of this kind." [24] "In my little way, there are only ordinary things·, little souls must be able to do all that I do." [25] "How easy it is to please Jesus, to ravish His heart," she used to say; "one has only to love Him, without looking at oneself, without too greatly examining one's defects. Consequently, when I happen to fall into some fault, I pick myself up at once. A glance toward Jesus and the knowledge of one's own wretchedness make reparation for everything. He calls Himself the 'Flower of the fields' (Cant. 2:1) in order to show how greatly Fie cherishes simplicity." [26]

Speaking of her way of training the novices, she remarked on the subject of disputes which may arise between two persons: "Nothing is easier than to cast the blame on the absent. I do just the contrary. My duty is to tell the truth to the souls entrusted to me, and I tell it/" [27]

Again she states: "It is an illusion to think that one can do good outside obedience." [28] And we see to what a degree in her own life were realized these words of hers: "The Lord is often pleased to give wisdom to little ones." [29] It is not therefore surprising that His Holiness Pius XI should have declared in his homily for the feast of her canonization: "It has therefore pleased the divine Goodness to endow and to enrich Sister Teresa with an entirely exceptional gift of wisdom. . . . The Spirit of truth showed her and taught her what He ordinarily hides from the wise and prudent and reveals to the

[23] Cf. *L'Esprit de sainte Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus,* 1923, pp. 163-86.
[24] *Ibid.,* p. 169.
[25] *Ibid.,* p. 183.
[26] *Ibid.,* pp. 185 f.
[27] Quoted by Father H. Petitot, O.P., *Sainte Thérèse de Lisieux* (1925), p. *7J-
[25] *Ibid.,* p. 176.
[22] *Ibid.,* p. 178. Cf. *Sainte Thérèse de L'Enfant-Jésus, histoire d'une âme par elle-même,* chap. 9, reduced edition, p. 18j.

humble." [808] Pope Benedict XV had spoken in like terms: "This happy servant of God had herself so much knowledge that she was able to indicate to others the true way of salvation." Her life and doctrine show how greatly the superior simplicity of the saints opens their intellect and renders it docile to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, that they may penetrate and taste the mysteries of salvation and attain to union with God.[31]

The saints know well what this union demands that it may be preserved in the midst of circumstances often unforeseen and painful. Superior simplicity united to discretion reminds them, no matter what happens, that "to them that love God [and persevere in this love], all things work together unto good."

To some it seems useless in a treatise on ascetical and mystical theology to insist on virtues such as these, and they are in a hurry to deal with questions on infused contemplation that are disputed among theologians and psychologists. We think, on the contrary, that it is extremely necessary to insist, as all the saints have done and as is done in every cause of beatification, on these Christian virtues which have so profound an influence on thought and life. Then the traditional doctrine on infused contemplation appears as a resultant of all that has been said about the progress of the acquired virtues, the infused virtues, and the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost in interior souls truly detached from themselves and almost continually united to God. Under the pretext that the doctrine relative to the Christian virtues and the seven gifts is known by all, some never examine it deeply. Contemplation is, nevertheless, in the sweet and profound intuition of the divine truths known by all Christians, for example, of those expressed in the Our Father. The virtue of simplicity, conceived as a reflection in us of the divine simplicity, reminds us of this fact.

[80] Quoted by Father H. Petitot, *ibid.,* p. 178.

[81] Cf. *The Imitation,* Bk. II, chap. 4: "Of a Pure Mind and a Simple Intention. Simplicity aimeth at God. . . . If thou wert inwardly good and pure, then wouldst thou discern all things without impediment, and comprehend them well. A pure heart penetrates heaven and hell."

CHAPTER XVII

The Spirit of Faith and Its Progress

WE have spoken of the progress of the Christian moral virtues in the illuminative way; now we shall discuss the progress of the theological virtues, first of all that of faith and its influence on our whole life. By so doing we shall be prepared to see what mental prayer should be in the illuminative way.

We shall see the nature of the spirit of faith, then how it should grow in us, finally what its excellence and power should be that we may continually live by it, according to the words of Scripture: "The just man liveth by faith." [1]

The Nature of the Spirit of Faith

In reality man always lives according to one spirit or another; whether it be according to the spirit of nature, when he does not go beyond practical naturalism, or according to the spirit of faith, when he tends seriously toward his last end, toward heaven and sanctity.

The spirit according to which we live is a special manner of considering all things, of seeing, judging, feeling, loving, sympathizing, willing, and acting. It is a particular mentality or disposition that colors almost all our judgments and acts, and communicates to our life its elevation or depression. Consequently the spirit of faith is a special manner of judging all things from the higher point of view of essentially supernatural faith, which is based on the authority of God revealing, on the veracity of God, Author of grace and glory, who by the road of faith wishes to lead us to eternal life.

We may better grasp the nature of the spirit of faith by considering the spirit opposed to it, which is a sort of spiritual blindness

[1] Gal. 3:11.

that enables man to attain divine things only materially and from without.[2] Thus Israel, the chosen people, did not have a sufficiently spiritual understanding of the privilege which it had received and in which, with the coming of the Savior, other peoples, called also to receive the divine revelation, were to share. The Jews thought that the bread reserved to the children of Israel should not be given to pagans. Christ reminds us of this way of thinking in the first words He addresses to the woman of Canaan; then He immediately inspires her with the admirable reply: "Yea, Lord; for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters." Then Jesus answering, said to her: "O woman, great is thy faith: be it done to thee as thou wilt. And her daughter was cured from that hour." [3]

The spirit of faith, which the Jews lacked and this humble woman possessed, is the spirit of divine and universal truth, the very object of faith, above any particularism of peoples or human societies. Thus St. Paul, who was at first strictly attached to the Synagogue and its prejudices, became the Apostle of the Gentiles. Similarly the glory of St. Augustine and St. Thomas does not consist in their being the masters of only a group of disciples, but in their being the common doctors of the Church.

The spirit of faith can have this universality only because of its eminent simplicity, which is a participation in the wisdom of God. The act of faith, as St. Thomas points out, is far above reasoning, a simple act by which we believe at the same time in God revealing and in God revealed.[4] By this essentially supernatural act we adhere infallibly to God who reveals and to the mysteries revealed. Thus by this simple act, superior to all reasoning, we tend in obscurity toward the contemplation of divine things above all the certitudes of a natural order. The essentially supernatural certitude of infused faith, as we said before,[5] greatly surpasses the rational certitude that

2Cf. St. Thomas, Ila Ilae, q. 15, and I Cor. 2:14: "But the sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the spirit of God; for it is foolishness to him."

' Matt. 15:27 f.

4Cf. St. Thomas, Ila Ilae, q.2, a. 2 ad ium: "These three (to believe in a God, to believe God, to believe in God) do not denote different acts of faith, but one and the same act having different relations to the object of faith." By a single and identical, essentially supernatural and simple act, the believer adheres infallibly to God who reveals, and believes a given mystery that is revealed, such as the Trinity, the Incarnation.

• Cf. *mpra,* I, O 52-55.

man can have of the divine origin of the Gospel through the historical and critical study of the miracles which confirm it.

Faith, which is a gift of God,® is like a spiritual sense enabling us to hear the harmony of revealed mysteries, or the harmony of the voice of God, before we are admitted to see Him face to face. Infused faith is like a superior musical sense enabling us to hear more or less indistinctly the meaning of a mysterious spiritual harmony of which God is the author. St. Paul states the matter clearly: "We have received not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is of God; that we may know the things that are given us from God. Which things also we speak, not in the learned words of human wisdom; but in the doctrine of the Spirit, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God; for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand, because it is spiritually examined. But the spiritual man judgeth all things; and he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ." 7

For judging in this manner, faith is aided by the gift of understanding, which makes man penetrate the meaning of the mysteries, and by the gift of wisdom, which makes him taste them. But it is faith itself which makes us adhere infallibly to the word of God.

The theological virtue of infused faith, in spite of the obscurity of the mysteries, is very superior to the intuitive and very luminous knowledge which the angels possess naturally. Infused faith, in reality, belongs to the same order as eternal life, of which it is like the seed; as St. Paul says, it is "the substance of things to be hoped for," 8 the basis of our justification.9 The angels themselves needed to receive this gratuitous gift of God in order to tend to the supernatural end to which they were called.10

As St. Francis de Sales 11 says in substance, when God gives us faith, He enters our soul and speaks to our spirit, not by way of discourse but by His inspiration. When faith comes, the soul strips it-

' Eph. 2:8: "For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God."

' Cf. I Cor. 2:12-16.

• Heb. 11:1.

• Rom. 3:22.

10 Cf. Ia, q.62, a. 2.

11 *Treatise on the Love of God,* Bk. II, chap. 14.

self of all discourses and arguments and, subjecting them to faith, it enthrones faith on them, recognizing it as queen. When the light of faith has cast the splendor of its truths on our understanding, our will immediately feels the warmth of celestial love.[1]

The Growth of Infused Faith in Us

It is important for the sanctification of our souls to remember that faith should daily increase in us. It may be greater in a poorly educated but holy, just man than in a theologian. St. Thomas Aquinas states: "A man's faith may be described as being greater, in one way, on the part of his intellect, on account of its greater certitude and firmness, and, in another way, on the part of his will, on account of his greater promptitude, devotion, or confidence." [13] The reason is that "faith results from the gift of grace, which is not equally in all." [14] Thus our Lord says of certain of His disciples that they are still men "of little faith," [15] "slow of heart to believe," [13] whereas He said to the woman of Canaan: "O woman, great is thy faith." [17]

"But my just man liveth by faith," [18] and increasingly so. There are holy individuals who have never made a conceptual analysis of the dogmas of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Eucharist, and who have never deduced from these dogmas the theological conclusions known to all theologians; but in these souls the infused virtue of faith is far more elevated, more intense than in many theologians. Many recent beatifications and canonizations confirm this fact. When we read the life of St. Bernadette of Lourdes or of St. Gemma Galgani, we can well exclaim: God grant that I may one day have as great faith as these souls!

Theologians say justly that faith may grow either in extension or in depth or in intensity. Our faith is extended when we gradually learn all that has been defined by the Church on the mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Eucharist, and the other points of

[1] Cf. *ibid.,* chap. 17.
[13] Cf. IIa IIae, q.5, a.4.
[14] *Ibid.,* ad jum.
[15] Matt. 6:30.
[17] Luke 24:25.
[13] Matt. 15:28.
[18] Heb. 10:38.

Christian doctrine. Thus theologians know explicitly all that has been defined by the Church; but it does not follow that they have a faith as intense and profound as it is extended. On the contrary, among the faithful there are saints who are ignorant of several points of doctrine defined by the Church, for example, the redemptive Incarnation and the Eucharist, and who penetrate profoundly these mysteries of salvation as they are simply announced in the Gospel. St. Benedict Joseph Labre, for example, never had occasion to read a theological treatise on the Incarnation, but he lived profoundly by this mystery and that of the Eucharist.

The apostles asked for this faith that is greater in depth and intensity when they said to the Lord: "Increase our faith." [19] And Jesus answered: "All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." [20] We shall obtain it especially if we ask perseveringly for ourselves what is necessary or manifestly useful to salvation, like the increase of the virtues.

The Excellence and the Power of the Spirit of Faith

The value of the spirit of faith is measured in trial by the difficulties which it surmounts. St. Paul says this eloquently in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered Isaac: and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son. . . . Accounting that God is able to raise up even from the dead. . . . By faith he [Moses] left Egypt, not fearing the fierceness of the king [Pharao]: for he endured as seeing Him that is invisible. . . . For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, Barac, Samson, Jephthe, David, Samuel, and the prophets; who by faith conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions [like Daniel], quenched the violence of fire [like the three children.in the furnace]. . . . And others had trial of mockeries and stripes, moreover also of bands and prisons. They were stoned [like Zachary], they were cut asunder [like Isaias], they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being in want, distressed, afflicted; of whom the world was not worthy." [21] (This

[19] Luke 17:5.
[20] Matt. 21:22.
[21] Hcb. 11:17ff.

same type of thing has been renewed in our own day in Russia and Mexico.) And St. Paul concludes: "And therefore, . . . let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us: looking on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith, who having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and now sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God." [22]

In his commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, St. Thomas Aquinas, carried away by the word of God and raised to the contemplation of this mystery, tells us: "Consider Christ who bore such contradiction on the part of sinners . . . , and in no matter what tribulation, you will find the remedy in the cross of Jesus. You will find in it the example of all the virtues. As St. Gregory the Great says, if we recall the passion of our Savior, there is nothing so hard and so painful that we cannot bear it with patience and love." [23]

The more the spirit of faith grows in us, the more we grasp the sense of the mystery of Christ, who came into this world for our salvation. That we may have this understanding, the Church, our Mother, places daily before our eyes at the end of Mass the prologue of the Gospel of St. John, which contains the synthesis of what revelation teaches about the mystery of Christ. Let us nourish our souls daily with this sublime page which we shall never sufficiently penetrate. It recalls to us the three births of the Word: His eternal birth, His temporal birth according to the flesh, and His spiritual birth in souls. It is the summary of what is loftiest in the four Gospels.

In this summary of Christian faith we have, first of all, the eternal birth of the Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." We have here a clear statement of the consubstantiality of the Word. "No man has seen God at any time: the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." [24] Thus light is thrown on the loftiest words of the Messianic psalms: "The Lord hath said to Me: Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee," [25] today in the unique instant of immobile eternity. "For to which of the angels," St. Paul asks, "hath He said at any time: Thou art My Son, today

" *Ibid.,* 12:1 f.
" *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews,* 12:3.
' 'John 1:1, 18.
"Pi. 2:7.

have I begotten Thee?" [28] The Word, splendor of the Father, is infinitely above all creatures, whom He created and preserves.

We should also nourish our souls with what is said in the same prologue about the temporal birth of the Son of God: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we saw His glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."[27] This temporal birth of Christ is the realization of all the Messianic prophecies and the source of all the graces that men will receive until the end of the world.

Lastly, we should live by what this same prologue tells us of the spiritual birth of the Word in our souls: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in His name, who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." [28] He gave them to become children of God by adoption, as He is the Son of God by nature. Our sonship is a figure of His, for we read in the same chapter: "And of His fullness we all have received, and grace for grace." [29]

To show us how He wishes to live in us, the Son of God says to us: "If anyone love Me, he will keep My word. And My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him."[30] It is not only the created gift of grace that will come, it is the divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and also the Holy Ghost, promised by the Savior to His disciples.

Instead of daily reciting the Credo and the Gloria in a mechanical manner, instead of almost mechanically saying the prologue of the Fourth Gospel, we should live more profoundly by this very substantial abridgment of divine revelation. The spirit of faith should thus, while growing, normally give us in ever greater measure the meaning of the mystery of Christ, the supernatural meaning that should gradually become penetrating and sweet contemplation, the source of peace and joy, according to St. Paul's words: "Rejoice in the Lord always. . . . And the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." [31]

24 Heb. i:y.
27 John 1:14.
28 *Ibid.,* ii–ij.
22 *Ibid., 16.*
30 *Ibid.,* 14:23.
31 Phil. 4:4, 7.

A Practical Manner of Living by the Spirit of Faith

We should live by the spirit of faith by judging all things under its superior light, thus considering God first of all, then our own soul, next our neighbor, and all the events of life.

Is it necessary to say that we should consider God in the light of faith? Unfortunately, it is only too necessary. Do we not often consider God Himself in the light of our prejudices, our very human sentiments, our petty passions, contrary to the testimony that He Himself gives us in Scripture? Does it not happen even in prayer that we listen to ourselves, that we ascribe to the Lord our own reflections which are more or less inspired by our self-love? In hours of presumption, are we not inclined to think that the divine mercy is for us, and divine justice for those who do not please us? In moments of discouragement, on the contrary, do we not in practice doubt the love of God for us, and His boundless mercy? We often disfigure the spiritual physiognomy of God, considering it from the point of view of our egoism, and not from that of salvation, under the true light of divine revelation.

From the point of view of faith, God appears not through the movements of our self-love, but in the mirror of the mysteries of the life and passion of the Savior and in that of the life of the Church, renewed daily by the Eucharist. Then the eye of faith, which St. Catherine of Siena often speaks of, is increasingly purified by the mortification of the senses, of inordinate passions, of personal judgment and self-will. Only then does this blindfold of pride gradually fall away, this veil which hinders us from glimpsing divine things or allows only their shadows and difficulties to appear. Often we consider the truths of faith in the same way as people who see the stained-glass windows of a cathedral only from without; it is under the interior light that we should learn to contemplate them.

We should consider ourselves in the light of faith. If we see ourselves only under a natural light, we discover in ourselves natural qualities that we often exaggerate. Then contact with reality, with trial, shows us our exaggeration; and we fall into depression or discouragement.

In the light of faith we would recognize the supernatural treasures that God placed in us by baptism and increased by Communion. We

would daily realize a little better the value of sanctifying grace, of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in us; we would consider what the fruit of a fervent Communion should be; the grandeur of the Christian vocation, in the light of the precept of love, would become increasingly apparent to us.

We would also see more clearly the obstacles that hinder the development of grace in us: the levity that makes us forget we have in us the seed of eternal life, and a foolish pride, completely contrary to the spirit of wisdom. From this higher point of view, we would not delay in discovering in ourselves two things that are exceedingly important for us to know: our predominant fault and our principal attraction of grace, the black and the white, what must be destroyed and what should grow.

But it is our neighbor especially whom we forget to consider in the light of faith. We see him in the light of reason, which is deformed by our prejudices, egoism, pride, jealousies, and other passions. Consequently we approve in our neighbor what pleases us from a human point of view, what is conformed to our natural tastes or to our whims, what is useful to us, what makes us important, what our neighbor owes us. As a result, we condemn in him what annoys us, often what renders him superior to us, what offends us. How many rash, harsh, pitiless judgments, how many more or less conscious calumnies spring from this gaze that is darkened by self-love and pride!

If we could see our neighbor in the light of faith, with a pure spiritual gaze, what profit for him and for us! Then we would see in our superiors the representatives of God; we would obey them wholeheartedly without criticism, as we would our Lord Himself. In people who are naturally not congenial to us, we would see souls redeemed by the blood of Christ, who are part of His mystical body and perhaps nearer to His Sacred Heart than we are. Our supernatural gaze would pierce the opaque envelope of flesh and blood which prevents us from seeing the souls that surround us. Often we live for long years in the company of beautiful souls without ever suspecting it. We must merit to see souls in order to love them deeply and sincerely. Had we this love, we could then tell them salutary truths and hear such truths from them.

Similarly, if we saw in the light of faith persons who naturally please us, we would occasionally discover in them supernatural vir-

tues that would greatly elevate and purify our affection. With benevolence we would also see the obstacles to the perfect reign of our Lord in them, and we could with true charity give them friendly advice or receive it from them in order to advance seriously in the way of God.

Lastly, we should see all the events of our lives, whether agreeable or painful, in the light of faith in order to live truly by the spirit of faith. We are often content to see the felicitous or unfortunate occurrences, as well as the facts of daily life, under their sensible aspect, which is accessible to the senses of the animal, or from the point of view of our more or less deformed reason. Rarely do we consider them from the supernatural point of view which would show us, as St. Paul says, that "to them that love God all things work together unto good," [82] even contradictions, the most painful and unforeseen vexations, even sin, says St. Augustine, if we humble ourselves for it.

In the injustices of men which we may have to undergo, we would also often discover the justice of God and, when wrongly accused of faults, we would see a well-merited punishment for hidden sins for which no one reproves us. We would also comprehend the meaning of the divine trials and of the purification which God has in view when He sends them to us.

We shall speak farther on of the passive purification of faith by certain of these trials, which free this theological virtue from all alloy and bring into powerful relief its formal motive: the first revealing Truth. Before reaching this stage, let us grow in faith, not judging everything from the sole point of view of reason. We must know how to renounce certain inferior lights or quasi-lights, that we may receive others that are far higher. The sun must set to enable us to see the stars in the depths of the heavens; likewise we must renounce the misuse of reason, which may be called practical rationalism, that we may discover the highly superior splendor of the great mysteries of faith and live profoundly by them.[88]

[82] Rom. 8:28.

[88] Therefore we see why in temptations against faith we must not reply to the enemy or pretend to hear what he says. We must repulse these temptations, or better, rise above them by more intense acts of faith. The Lord permits them only that they may aid our progress. Cf. St. Francis de Sales, Letter 737 to the Baroness de Chantal.

CHAPTER XVIII

Confidence in God; Its Certitude

SINCE we have spoken of the spirit of faith, it is fitting that we consider what hope in God, or confidence in Him, should be in proficients, and that we state precisely what must be understood by the certitude of hope, which is based on that of faith and has a character *sui generis* which it is important to note.

Infused hope, no less than faith, is necessary to salvation and perfection. Moreover, to have a generous interior life, it is not sufficient to hope in God weakly and intermittently, as so many Christians do. His often obscure and occasionally disconcerting good pleasure must be loved, accepted with a spirit of filial submission, and the divine help awaited with a firm, humble, and persevering confidence.

Defects to Be Avoided

In connection with this virtue, we should avoid two contrary defects: presumption and discouragement. By noting them at the beginning of our discussion, we may see more clearly the true nature of hope, which rises like a summit between these opposing deviations.

There are two kinds of presumption: either man relies excessively on his own powers, like the Pelagians, not asking as much as he should for the help of God, not recalling sufficiently the necessity of grace for every salutary act; or, on the other hand, he expects from the divine mercy what God cannot grant: for example, pardon without true repentance, or eternal life without any effort to merit it. These two forms of presumption are mutually contradictory, since the first presumes on our strength, whereas the second expects from God what He has in no way promised.

Moreover, when trial and contradiction come, the presumptuous

fall into the opposite defect, discouragement, as if the difficult good *{bonum arduum),* which is the object of hope, becomes inaccessible. Discouragement might lead to spiritual sloth, to acedia, which makes a man judge the work of sanctification too difficult and turns him away from every effort in this direction. He might thus even fall into despair. Alany souls oscillate thus between presumption and discouragement, and never succeed in arriving, at least practically, at a true notion of Christian hope and in living by it as they should.

The True Nature of Christian Hope

Less is said about the virtue of hope than about faith and charity. Yet hope is of great importance. Most certainly Christian hope, as an infused and theological virtue, is essentially supernatural, and consequently immensely surpasses the natural desire to be happy and also a natural knowledge of the divine goodness.

By infused hope we tend toward eternal life, toward supernatural beatitude, which is nothing less than the possession of God: seeing God immediately as He sees Himself, loving Him as He loves Himself. We tend toward Him, relying on the divine help which He has promised us. The formal motive of hope is not our effort, it is God our Helper *{Deus auxiliator et auxilians),* according to His mercy, His promises, His omnipotence.[1]

Thus we desire God for ourselves, but first for Himself; for He is the last End of the act of hope, which should, moreover, be vivified by charity: [2] in other words, by hope, we desire God, our last End, not by subordinating Him to ourselves, like the food necessary to our subsistence, but by subordinating ourselves to Him. Thus it is evident, in contradistinction to the teaching of the quietists, that hope, although inferior to charity, contains nothing inordinate. It is a lofty virtue, though not the greatest of all.

Since, in fact, among the moral virtues, acquired magnanimity, and especially infused magnanimity, has a high place, so far as it

[1] The formal motive of a theological virtue cannot be something created, no matter how noble; it can only be God Himself, in this case, God, our Helper.

[2] Cajetan says very clearly, *In Ham llae,* q. 17, a. 5, no. *6:* "Desidero Deum, mihi, non propter me, sed propter Deum." We desire God for ourselves without subordinating Him to ourselves, whereas we desire a fruit, which is inferior to us, for ourselves and for our own sake. The last end of the act of hope is God Himself.

makes us tend to great things (as we see in the founders of religious orders, in their works and struggles); with even greater reason, infused hope is a lofty virtue that makes us tend not only toward great things, but also toward God Himself to be possessed for eternity. This truth is emphasized by the fact that hope does not make us desire only an inferior degree of supernatural beatitude, but eternal life itself without fixing the degree. Indeed it leads us to advance always more generously toward God by giving us a greater desire for Him.

The Certitude of Hope

In this tendency of hope toward eternal life, there is at one and the same time a mystery still unknown and a certitude, about the nature of which some are deceived. St. Thomas explains it clearly, as he also explains the different types of certitude: those of knowledge,[3] faith,[4] prudence,[5] and the gift of wisdom.[6]

He raises first the following objection: [7] No man can be certain of his salvation without a special revelation,[8] which is rare; it seems, therefore, that hope cannot be certain. Moreover, it is not true that all who hope will be saved; it happens that some among them become discouraged in time and finally are lost. It seems, therefore, that hope is not truly certain.

In this problem, there is the element of the unknown, a mystery; yet hope remains certain. This mystery with its light and shade is one of the most beautiful in Christian teaching. As St. Thomas shows clearly, the certitude of hope differs from that of faith since it is not a certitude of the intellect, but a certitude shared in the will and in its aspect as a tendency. "Certitude," says the holy doctor, "is

[3] Cf. Ha Ilae, q.z, a. i, and *De veritate,* q. 14, a. 1: The certitude which arises from evidence.

[4] Cf. *ibid.,* q.4, a. 8: Certitude without evidence, but based on the authority of God revealing.

[5] Cf. la Ilae, q.57, a.5 ad jum: Certitude through conformity with a right appetite.

[6] Cf. Ila Ilae, q.45, a. 2: Certitude by connaturality or sympathy with divine things, under the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

[7] *Ibid.,* q. 18, a. 4.

[8] The Council of Trent (Sess. VI, chap. 13) defined this point against the Protestants.

essentially in the cognitive faculty; but it is also by participation in all that is moved infallibly to its end by the cognitive power. . . . In this way we say that nature works with certainty, since it is moved by the divine intellect which moves everything with certainty to its end (the bee builds surely its hive and makes honey). . . . Thus too, hope tends with certitude to its end, as though sharing in the certitude of faith, which is in the cognitive faculty." [9] Likewise, in the order of human affairs, when we have taken the train for Rome, without being absolutely sure of arriving, we are certain of going in the right direction, and we hope to reach the end of our journey.

In other words, by certain hope we have not as yet the certitude of our future salvation, which is not revealed to us (for that we would need a special revelation), but we tend certainly toward salvation, under the infallible direction of faith and according to the promises of God, "who never commands the impossible, but who orders us to do what lies in our power and to ask for help for what we cannot do." [10] The certitude of Christian hope is not, therefore, as yet the certitude of salvation, but it is the firmest kind of certitude that we are tending toward salvation. From this statement spring many practical conclusions on the qualities or properties of Christian hope, which should grow in us with hope.

The Qualities of Christian Hope

How should we hope in God to avoid the twofold presumption that we have spoken of and the discouragement that often follows it? The Council of Trent tells us: "All should have a very firm confidence in the help of God. For if men do not fail to correspond to divine grace, as God Himself has begun the work of salvation in us, He will finish it, working in us 'both to will and to accomplish.'" [11] However, 'He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall' [12] and 'with fear and trembling work out his salvation,' [13] in labors, vigils, prayer, alms, fasts, purity, [14] according to these

•Cf. Ila Ilae, q.i8, a.4.
[10] Cf. Council of Trent (Denzinger, *Enchiridion,* no. 804).
[11] Phil. 2:13.
[12] Cf. I Cor. 10:12.
*· Phil. 11:12.
[14] Cf. II Cor. 6:3 if.

words of the Apostle: 'For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die: but if by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.' " [15]

From this admirable doctrine it follows that Christian hope should have two qualities or properties: it should be laborious to avoid the presumption which expects the divine reward without working for it; and it should be firm, invincible, to avoid discouragement.

Hope should be laborious because it tends toward a possible, difficult good, but a difficult, arduous future good, which is the object of merit. We must work at our salvation, first of all, to preserve in ourselves a living hope and not a vain presumption. We must work in the spirit of humility and abnegation to preserve a keen desire for eternal life, for God, our beatitude, a desire whose ardor would be destroyed by the intensity of contrary desires, like those of earthly joys and of ambition. This keen desire for heaven, this ardent desire for God, is too rare even among good Christians. And yet, if there is one thing we should desire with a holy ardor, is it not the divine union? What will we desire ardently, therefore, if we do not have a keen desire for God?

Furthermore, we must work to merit eternal beatitude: to see God as He sees Himself and to love Him as He loves Himself. Without doubt, we need grace to attain this end; but it is given to us, says St. Augustine, not that we may do nothing, but that we may work with continually increasing generosity until the end: "He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved." [16] "For he also that striveth for the mastery is not crowned, except he strive lawfully." [17] We must work to remove the obstacles of concupiscence, of sloth, pride, dissensions, ambition, and to observe the precepts with always greater perfection according to the spirit of our vocation.

Laborious hope together with the gift of fear, or the fear of sin, saves us from presumption. By this virtue and this gift of fear, is preserved the equilibrium of the spirit in divine things, as a little lower in the order of the virtues, not theological but moral, spiritual balance is safeguarded by humility and magnanimity, which are

[15] Rom. 8: ij. Cf. Council of Trent, Sess. VI, chap. 13 (Denzinger, no. 806).
[16] Matt. 10:22.
[17] Cf. II Tim. 2:5.

like the two sides of a scale, that we may escape falling either into pride or into pusillanimity.[18]

Lastly, in the midst of difficulties that may present themselves until death, and even until our entrance into heaven, hope should be most firm and invincible. It should not be broken by temptations, trials, or the sight of our sins. It should never yield to temptations coming from the world, the flesh, or the devil: "If God be for us, who is against us?" [19] God never commands the impossible; more than that, as St. Paul says: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it." [20]

Hope should not be broken either by the trials which the Lord sends to purify us and to make us work for the salvation of souls. In time of trial we should not forget that the formal motive of hope is God our Helper, *Deus auxilians,* according to His mercy, promises, and omnipotence. Because Job had the virtue of hope, he declared: "Although He should kill me, I will trust in Him." [21] And in the Epistle to the Romans we read: "Who against hope believed in hope; that he [Abraham] might be made the father of many nations, according to that which was said to him: 'So shall thy seed be.' "[22] Contrary to every human hope, in spite of his great age, he hoped, and even prepared himself for the immolation of his son Isaac, the son of promise, from whom his posterity was to be born.

The aim of the purification of hope is to free the virtue from all alloy of inordinate self-love, but not to lead us to the sacrifice of the desire of our salvation, as the quietists declared. Such a sacrifice would be equivalent to renouncing our love of God above all for all eternity, and, by sacrificing hope under the pretext of pure love, we would also sacrifice charity. We must, on the contrary, hope against all hope.

Finally, confidence should not be broken by the sight and the memory of our sins. Therefore St. Catherine of Siena used to say: "Never consider your past sins except in the light of infinite mercy, so that the memory of them may not discourage you, but may lead

*. Cf. Ila Ilae, q. 161, a. 1 ad sum, and a. 2 ad jum; q. 162, a. 1 ad 311m; q. 129, a. 3 ad 411m.

19 Rom. 8:31.

*°Cf. I Cor. 10:13.

81 Job 13:13.

'* Rain. 4:18.

you to place your confidence in the infinite value of the Savior's merits."

St. Teresa of the Child Jesus stated that her immense confidence in God did not come from the knowledge of her innocence, but from the thought of the infinite mercy and infinite merits of the Savior, and that, even if she were the greatest wretch on earth, her confidence in God would not for that reason be diminished. This is a magnificent way of stating that the formal motive of hope, a theological virtue, is not our effort or our innocence, but God our Helper, *Deus auxilians,* helpful Mercy.

Admirable Effects of Living Hope Confirmed by Trials

After various trials, hope, which has been greatly strengthened, surmounts all obstacles. According to St. Paul: "We . . . glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God. And not only so; but we glory also in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience trial; and trial hope; and hope confoundeth not, because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us."[23]

Commenting on St. Paul's words, St. Thomas says: "St. Paul shows us first of all the grandeur of hope by the grandeur of the thing hoped for (that is, eternal life), then the power, the vehemence of hope. In fact, he who strongly hopes for something, willingly bears for that reason difficulties and bitterness. And therefore the sign that we have a strong hope in Christ is that we glory not only in the thought of future glory, but in our tribulations and the trials which we have to bear. 'Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.'[24] Moreover, the Apostle St. James says: 'My brethren, count it all joy, when you shall fall into divers temptations, knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience.'[25] And from the fact that a man bears tribulation patiently, he is rendered excellent, *probatus.* We read of the just in the Book of Wisdom: 'Though in the sight of men they suffered torments, their hope is full of immortality. Afflicted in few things, in many

2,Rom. 5:2-5.
24 Acts 14:21.
" Jas. i:2 f.

they shall be well rewarded: because God hath tried them, and found them worthy of Himself. As gold in the furnace He hath proved them, and as a victim of a holocaust He hath received them.'[28] Thus trial causes hope to grow, and hope does not deceive us, for God does not abandon those who trust Him. 'No one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded.'[27] It is evident that the Lord will not refuse Himself to those who love Him, to those to whom He has already given His Son. . . . He has prepared eternal beatitude for those who love Him above all else."[28]

From what has just been said we perceive that, contrary to the opinion held by the quietists, in great trials, instead of sacrificing our desire of salvation, we must "hope against all hope" while loving God for Himself. Thus charity increases greatly; it becomes pure love which, far from destroying confidence, vivifies it.

Certainly these trials serve to purify hope of all self-love, of the desire of our own perfection, so far as it is ours. A servant of God who had desired to become a saint later expressed her desire under a less personal and more objective form: "Lord, may Your kingdom come more and more profoundly in me." She was happy not to have the reputation of being a saint, happy to be but little esteemed by those about her; she thus aspired truly to be always more closely united to our Lord, to be more loved by Him. Thus hope grew as it was being purified.

So Abraham, the father of believers, hoped, when he was tried and prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac. He did not cease to believe that this child was the son of promise, that his posterity would be greatly blessed, "accounting that God is able to raise up even from the dead."[29]

St. Philip Neri used to pray: "I thank Thee with my whole heart, Lord God, that things do not go as I should like them to, but as

[22] Wisd. 3:4-6.

[27] Ecclus. 2:11.

[28] *Comm. in ep. ad. Rom.,* 5:2. For those who wish not only to distinguish but, as it were, to separate asceticism from mysticism, it is difficult to say, in reading the Epistles of St. Paul and the commentaries of the fathers and doctors, where asceticism ends and mysticism begins. In reality, mysticism commences when the superhuman mode of the gifts of the Holy Ghost begins to prevail, in particular of the gifts of understanding and wisdom: that is, when, under the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, we penetrate and taste the mystery of faith: "Taste and see that the Lord is sweet."

[22] Hcb. 11:19.

Thou dost wish. It is better that they should go according to Thy way, which is better than mine."

St. Nicholas of Flüe admirably expressed in a prayer the union of firmest hope and of pure love: "Lord, take from me all that hinders me from drawing near to Thee; give me all that will lead me to Thee. Take me from myself and give me entirely to Thyself." We can also say, as an expression of hope and pure love: "Give Thyself, Lord, entirely to me, that I may love Thee purely and forever."

As a practical conclusion, let us remember that in our lives there are two parallel series of daily facts: that of the outward events which succeed one another from morning to night, and that of the actual graces which are offered to us and even bestowed on us from moment to moment that we may draw from these occurrences, whether pleasurable or painful, the greatest spiritual profit. If we thought often of this fact, there would be realized increasingly in our lives St. Paul's statement: "To them that love God all things work together unto good," [30] even annoyances, rebuffs, and contradictions, which are so many occasions of lifting our hearts toward God in a spirit of faith and confidence in Him.

St. Francis de Sales says in his Second Conference on Hope: "Although we do not feel confidence in God, we must not fail to make acts of hope. Distrust of ourselves and of our own strength should be accompanied by humility and faith, which obtain the grace of confidence in God. The more unfortunate we are, the more we should have confidence in Him who sees our state, and who can come to our assistance. No one trusts in God without reaping the fruits of his hope. The soul should remain tranquil and rely on Him who can give the increase to what has been sown and planted. We must not cease to labor, but in toiling we must trust in God for the success of our works."

[30] Rom. 8:28.

chapter XIX

The Love of Conformity to the Divine Will

HAVING spoken of the spirit of faith and of trust in God, we must consider what the progress of charity should be in the illuminative way, that the soul may pass from the mercenary or interested love of the imperfect to perfect charity. Consequently we shall discuss the signs of imperfect love, then those of the progress of charity, the relations of charity with our natural dispositions, and its progressive conformity to the divine will.

The Signs of Imperfect Love

St. Catherine of Siena indicates clearly in her *Dialogue* [1] the signs of mercenary love; we quoted this passage earlier in this work.[2] The saint says in substance that love remains imperfect in the just man when, in the service of God, he is still too much attached to his own interests, when he still seeks himself and has an excessive desire of his own satisfaction.

The same imperfection is then found in his love of his neighbor. In loving his neighbor, he seeks self, takes complacency, for example, in his own natural activity, in which there is rash haste, egoistical eagerness, occasionally followed by coldness when his love is not returned, and he believes that he sees in others ingratitude, a failure to appreciate the benefits he bestows on them.

In the same chapter the saint points out that the imperfection of this love of God and souls is clearly shown by the fact that, as soon as we are deprived of the consolations that we had in God, this love

[1] *The Dialogue,* chap. 60.
[2] Cf. *supra,* chap. 3, pp. 30 f.

no longer suffices us and can no longer subsist; it languishes and often grows colder and colder as God withdraws His spiritual consolations and sends us struggles and contradictions in order to exercise us in virtue. Nevertheless He acts thus only to put our inordinate self-love to death and to cause the charity that we received at baptism to grow. This charity should become a living flame of love and notably elevate all our legitimate affections.

The Nature of Charity and the Marks of Its Progress

The signs of the progress of charity are deduced from its very nature. Scripture tells us in several places that the just man is the "friend of God."[3] St. Thomas,[4] explaining these words of Scripture, shows us that charity is essentially a love of friendship we should have for God because of His infinite goodness which radiates on us, vivifying us and drawing us to Himself.

Every true friendship, St. Thomas tells us, implies three qualities: it is first of all a love of benevolence by which a man wishes good to another, as to himself; in this it differs from the love of concupiscence or of covetousness, by which one desires a good for oneself, as one desires a fruit or the bread necessary to subsistence. We ought to wish our friends the good which is suitable for them, and we should wish that God may reign profoundly over minds and hearts.

Moreover, every true friendship presupposes a love of mutual benevolence; it is not sufficient that it exist on the part of one person only. The two friends should wish each other well. And the more elevated the good which they wish each other, the more noble is this friendship. It is based on virtue when friends wish each other not only what is pleasant or useful, like the goods of earth and fortune, but what is virtuous—fidelity to duty, progress in the love of moral and spiritual good.

Lastly, to constitute a true friendship, this mutual love of benevolence does not suffice. We may, in fact, have benevolence for a

8In the Book of Judith (8:22), Abraham is called the friend of God. Wisdom (7:27) says that the just man lives in the divine friendship. And Christ especially tells us: "I will not now call you servants . . . but I have called you friends."

4 Cf. Ha Ilae, q.23, a. 1.

person at a distance, whom we know only through hearsay, and that person may have the same benevolence for us; we are not, however, friends for that reason. Friendship requires in addition a community of life *{convivere).* It implies that people know each other, love each other, live together, spiritually at least, by the exchange of most secret thoughts and feelings. Friendship thus conceived tends to a very close union of thought, feeling, willing, prayer, sacrifice, and action.

These three characters of true friendship—the love of benevolence, mutual love, and community of life—are precisely found in the charity which unites us to God and to souls in Him.

The natural inclination which already subsists in the depths of our will, in spite of original sin, inclines us to love God, the Author of our nature, more than ourselves and above all, as in an organism the part loves the whole more than itself, as the hand exposes itself naturally to preserve the body and especially the head.® But this natural inclination, attenuated by original sin, cannot, without the grace which heals *{gratia sanans),* lead us to an efficacious love of God above all things.®

Far above this natural inclination, we received in baptism sanctifying grace and charity with faith and hope. And charity is precisely this love of mutual benevolence which makes us wish God, the Author of grace, the good that is suitable to Him, His supreme reign over souls, as He wishes our good for time and eternity. Such a desire is indeed a friendship based on community of life, for God has communicated to us a participation in His intimate life by giving us grace, the seed of eternal life.7 By grace, we are "born of God," as we read in the prologue of St. John's Gospel; we resemble God as children resemble their father. And this community of life implies a permanent union, which is at times only habitual, for example, during sleep; at others, when we make an act of love of God, it is actual. Then there is truly community of life, the meeting of the paternal love of God for His child, and of the love of the child

"Cf. St. Thomas, la, q.6o, a. 5; Ila Ilae, q.26, a.3. See also St. Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God,* Bk. I, chaps. 9, 16-18.

• *Suimna,* la Ilae, q. 109, a. 3.

7 In supernatural attrition which, with the sacrament of penance, justifies the soul, there is an initial love of benevolence, according to many theologians; but there is not yet community of life, the *convivere,* for there is not the state of grace.

for the Father who vivifies it and blesses it. This is especially true when, by a special inspiration, the Lord inclines us to an act of infused love, which we could not make with common, actual grace. There is a spiritual communion, the prelude of the spiritual communion of heaven, which will no longer be measured by time, but by the indivisible instant of changeless eternity.

Such is indeed the friendship with God which begins on earth. Because Abraham had this love, he was called the friend of God. For the same reason the Book of Wisdom tells us that the just man lives in the divine friendship, and Christ says: "I will not now call you servants . . . but I have called you friends." By his analysis of the distinctive marks of friendship, St. Thomas only explains these divine words; he does not deduce a new truth; he explains revealed truth and enables us to penetrate it deeply.§

Charity, even in its least degree, makes us love God more than ourselves and more than His gifts with an efficacious love of esteem, because God is infinitely better than we and than every created gift. Efficacious love of esteem is not always felt, for example, in aridity; and at the beginning it has not yet the intensity or spontaneity that it has in the perfect, and especially in the blessed. A good Christian mother feels her love for her child, whom she holds in her arms, more than her love for God, whom she does not see; yet, if she is truly Christian, she loves the Lord with an efficacious love of esteem more than her child. For this reason, theologians distinguish commonly between appreciative love (love of esteem) and intensive love, which is generally greater for loved ones whom we see than for those who are at a distance. But, with the progress of charity, the love of esteem for God becomes more intense and is known as zeal; in heaven its impetuosity will exceed that of all our strongest affections.

Such is the nature of the virtue of charity; it is the principle of a love of God that is like the flowing of our hearts toward Him who draws us and vivifies us. Thus we ultimately find a great gratification in Him, desiring that He may reign more and more profoundly in our souls and in the souls of others. For this love of God, knowledge is not necessary; to know our heavenly Father through faith suffices. We cannot cease to love Him without beginning our own

§ St. Thomas shows that therein lies the essence of charity.

destruction, and we can cease to love Him by any mortal sin.

The efficacious love of esteem of God above all else, which may subsist in great aridity of the sensible faculties, is very much opposed to sentimentality, which is the affectation of a love one does not have.

Since such is the nature of charity, what are the indications of its progress? There are, first of all, the signs of the state of grace: (1) not to be conscious of any mortal sin; (2) not to seek earthly things, pleasures, wealth, honors; (3) to take pleasure in the presence of God, to love to think of Him, adore Him, pray to Him, thank Him, ask His pardon, talk to Him, aspire to Him.9 To these signs must be added the following: (4) to wish to please God more than all those whom one loves; (5) to love one's neighbor effectively, in spite of the defects which are in him, as they are in us, and to love him because he is the child of God and is beloved by Him. Then one loves God in one's neighbor, and one's neighbor in God. Christ says: "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another." 10

These signs are summed up in St. Paul's words: "Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." 11

Happy is the heart that loves God in this manner, without any other pleasure than that which it has in pleasing God! If the soul is faithful, it will one day taste the delights of this love and take an unequaled happiness in Him who is limitless good, the infinite plenitude of good, into which the soul may plunge and lose itself as in a spiritual ocean without ever meeting with any obstacle. Thus the just man begins to love God with a love of esteem (appreciative

• In la Ilae, q. 112, a. *5,* St. Thomas speaks of these signs, and he adds others in the *Contra Gentes,* Bk. IV, chaps. 21 f. Among these last signs, St. Thomas enumerates the following: "To converse with one's friend, to delight in his presence, to be of one mind with one's friend through conformity of will, the liberty of the sons of God is in this conformity, most willingly to speak of God or to hear the word of God."

,0John 13:35.

11 Cf. I Cor. 13:4-7.

love) above all things, and he tends to love Him above all intensively with the ardent zeal which perseveres in aridity in the midst of trials and persecutions.

The Love of God and Our Natural Dispositions

But, it will be objected, there are harsh, rude, bitter characters, little inclined to affection. How, therefore, does what we have just said apply to them? St. Francis de Sales replies to this objection as St. Thomas does, stating that one cannot admit, without falling into the naturalism of the Pelagians, that the distribution of divine love is made to men according to their natural qualities and dispositions.[12]

St. Francis de Sales adds:

> The supernatural love which God by His goodness pours into our hearts . . . is in the supreme point of the spirit . . . , which is independent of every natural character. . . . It is, nevertheless, true that naturally loving souls, once they are well purified of the love of creatures, do marvels in holy love, love finding a great ease in dilating itself in all the faculties of their hearts. Thence proceeds a very agreeable sweetness, which does not appear in those whose souls are harsh, melancholy, and untractable.
>
> Nevertheless, if two persons, one of whom is loving and gentle, the other naturally fretful and bitter, have an equal charity, they will doubtless love God equally, but not similarly. The heart that is naturally gentle will love more easily, amiably, sweetly, but not more solidly, or more perfectly. Thus the love which will arise among the thorns and repugnances of a harsh and cold nature, will be braver and more glorious, as the other will be more delightful and charming.[18]

It matters little, then, whether one is naturally disposed to love when

12 In his treatise on charity (IIa IIae, q.24, a.3), St. Thomas writes: "Since charity surpasses the proportion of human nature, . . . (and of angelic nature) it depends, not on any natural virtue, but on the sole grace of the Holy Ghost who infuses charity." Cf. Eph. 4:7: "To everyone of us is given grace according to the measure of the giving of Christ." Cf. Rom. 12:3; I Cor. 12:11.

St. Thomas likewise says (Ia IIae, q. 109, a. 6): "Man cannot prepare himself to receive the light of grace except by the gratuitous help of God moving him inwardly." *Ibid.,* q. 112, a.3, and also a.4: "The first cause of this diversity [of graces] is to be sought on the part of God, who dispenses His gifts of grace variously, that the beauty and perfection of the Church may result from these various degrees."

18 Thus it is, as has often been said, that meekness dominated in St. Francis de Sales, and fortitude in St. Jane de Chantal.

it is a question of a supernatural love by which one acts only supernaturally. Only, Theotime, I would gladly say to all men: Oh, mortals! If your hearts are inclined to love, why do you not aspire to celestial and divine love? But, if you are harsh and bitter of heart, poor souls, since you are deprived of natural love, why do you not aspire to supernatural love, which will lovingly be given you by Him who calls you in so holy a manner to love Him? [14]

From this doctrine on the relation of the life of grace and of our natural dispositions spring consequences of great importance in mystical theology.[16]

Progressive Conformity to the Signified Divine Will

The love of conformity consists in wishing all that the divine will signifies to us as being its intention.[18] This will is signified to us by the precepts and by the counsels conformable to our vocation,

[14] *Treatise on the Love of God,* Bk. XII, chap. i.

[18] Those who do not wish to admit that mystical contemplation proceeds from infused faith illumined by the gifts of wisdom and understanding, and who thus misunderstand the traditional doctrine of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost granted to all the just, may seek to explain the mystical life in two very different manners.

Some, whose minimizing of the necessity of grace here recalls Pelagian naturalism, will apply their doctrine not to common Christian life but to the mystical life. They will declare that the mystical life is explained especially by the natural qualities of certain persons who are more emotional and poetical than others. In this system there is danger of confounding the true mysticism of the great servants of God, for instance, of St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa, with the sentimentality or the affectation of sentiment which they combated ardently, teaching that in the interior life we must not seek to feel consolation, but to tend toward God in aridity as well as in joy.

Others, on the contrary, to escape admitting that the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith and the union with God resulting from it is in the normal way of sanctity', will seek to explain the mystical life by extraordinary graces, such as prophecy, and will not adequately distinguish it from visions and revelations. St. John of the Cross, on the other hand, continually insisted on this distinction, maintaining that as much as one should desire the close union with God, which becomes the transforming union, just so much should one avoid the desire of extraordinary and, as it were, exterior graces, such as visions and revelations. These deviations show how important it is to preserve the traditional doctrine on the relations of the life of grace to our natural dispositions.

[18] Cf. St. Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God,* Bk. VIII, chap, j; Bk. IX, chap. 6.

and by events, some of which are painful and unexpected.[17] We are speaking of the signified divine will when we say in the Our Father: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Thus we see what progressive conformity to the divine will should be.

To love God in prosperity is good, provided that one does not love prosperity as much or more than God Himself. In any case, this is only an inferior degree of love, easy to all. When facility in the practice of duty ceases, to love the divine will in its commandments, counsels, inspirations, to live by it, constitutes a second degree which is more perfect and which recalls the words of Jesus: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me."[18]

But we must also imitate Christ in loving God in painful and unbearable things, in daily vexations and tribulations, which His providence permits in our lives for a higher good. And, indeed, we cannot truly love God unless we love these tribulations, not in themselves, but for the spiritual good which results from patience in bearing them. Consequently, to love sufferings and afflictions for the love of God is the highest degree of holy charity. Our adversities are then converted into good, for, as St. Paul says: "To them that love God [and who persevere in this love], all things work together unto good."[19]

St. Francis de Sales[20] remarks on the subject of ardent love that, according to Plato, it is poor, ragged, naked, pale, emaciated, homeless, always indigent; it sleeps out of doors on the hard ground, for it makes a man leave everything for the one he loves; it causes him to lose sleep and to aspire to an ever closer union. Plato spoke thus of natural love; but, adds the holy Bishop of Geneva, all of this is still truer of divine love when it wounds a soul deeply. Therefore, St. Paul wrote: "Even unto this hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no fixed abode. . . . We are made as the refuse of this world."[21]

"Who reduced him to this state," asks St. Francis de Sales, "except love? It was love which cast St. Francis of Assisi naked before his bishop and made him die naked on the ground. It was love that

17 Cf. *Summa,* la, q. 19, a. 11 f., and la Ilae, q. 19, a. 9 f.
18 John 4:34.
19 Rom. 8:18.
20 *Treatise on the Love of God,* Bk. VI, chap. ij.
21 Cf. I Cor. 4:11, 13.

made him a beggar all his life. It was love that sent the great St. Francis Xavier, poor, indigent, tattered, here and there in the Indies; . . . it was love which reduced the great cardinal, St. Charles, archbishop of Milan, to such poverty . . . that he was (in his episcopal palace) like a dog in the house of his master."

The love of conformity to the divine will is like a fire, the flames of which are the more beautiful and bright as they are fed with more delicate matter, for example, with drier, purer, and better wood. For this reason, says the same saint, every love that does not have its origin in the Savior's passion is frivolous and dangerous.[22] The death of Jesus, the supreme expression of His love for us, is the strongest incentive to our love of Him. Nothing satisfies our hearts as does the love of Jesus Christ, by the way of perfect spoliation which unites the soul very closely to the divine will.[28]

The love of conformity to the divine will signified by the precepts and counsels, and by events, enables us to abandon ourselves to the divine will of good pleasure, not yet manifested, on which our future depends.[24] In this filial abandonment there is faith, hope, and love of God; it may be expressed as follows: "Lord, I trust in Thee!" From this comes the motto: "Fidelity and abandonment," which preserves the balance between activity and passivity, above slothful quiet and restless and fruitless agitation. Abandonment is the way to follow; daily and hourly fidelity, the steps to take on this way. By fidelity in the light of the commandments, we enter the obscure mystery of the divine good pleasure, which is that of predestination.

We certainly do not possess all the love we need; therefore, the saints tell us, it is folly to expend our love inordinately upon creatures. The cooling of divine love comes from venial sin or from affection to venial sin. On the contrary, a generous act of charity merits and obtains for us immediately the increase of this infused virtue, which vivifies all the others and renders their acts meritorious. The increase of charity prepares us to see God better eternally and to love Him more intimately forever.

We should, therefore, deem as nothing all that we give to obtain

[22] *The Love of God,* Bk. IX, chap. 16.

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] The signified will of God is thus the domain of obedience, and His will of good pleasure not yet manifested is the domain of abandonment.

the priceless treasure of the love of God, of ardent love. He alone gives to the human heart the interior charity that it lacks. Without Him our hearts are cold; we experience only the passing warmth of an intermittent fever.

When we give our love to God, He always gives us His. Indeed He forestalls us for, without His grace, we could not rise above our self-love; only grace, for which we should ask incessantly, just as we always need air in order to breathe, gives us true generosity.

During the journey toward eternity, we must never say that we have sufficient love of God. We should make continual progress in love. The traveler *(viator')* who advances toward God progresses with steps of love, as St. Gregory the Great says, that is, by ever higher acts of love. God desires that we should thus love Him more each day. The song of the journey toward eternity is a hymn of love, that of the holy liturgy, which is the voice of the Church; it is the song of the spouse of Christ.

It is not unfitting to tremble at times in the presence of God, but love must predominate. We must fear God filially through love, and not love Him through fear; therefore filial fear, that of sin, grows with charity, whereas servile fear, that of punishment, diminishes.

Our love of God grows by our carrying the cross. St. Francis de Sales declared: "The most generous and courageous characters are formed in crosses and afflictions, and cowardly souls are pleased only in prosperity. Moreover, the pure love of God is practiced far more easily in adversities than in comforts, for tribulation has nothing amiable about it except the hand of God who sends it . . . whereas prosperity has of itself attractions which charm our senses."[25]

As the love of conformity to the divine will grows, it renders sweet the sufferings on which it feeds; the soul then walks with assurance according to the words of the Savior: "He that followeth Me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life."[26]

The love of God grows each time we mortify self-love. To desire ardently divine love, we must, therefore, retrench all that cannot be quickened by it. Growing thus, the love of God renders the virtues eminently more pleasing to God than they are by their own nature; the meritorious degree of their acts depends upon the degree

28 Cf. *L'Esprit de saint François de Sales,* Part XV, chap. 13.
20 John 8:12.

of love. Thereby the accomplishment of our duties of state can be greatly sanctified and not a minute will be lost for eternity.[27]

If a person has had a high degree of charity and has never sinned mortally, but his love has grown cool through some attachment to venial sin, he still keeps the treasure of lofty charity [28] although he has lost its radiation or fervor like a golden chalice that has become tarnished and covered with dust, or like a flame in a clouded glass shade. Therefore, it is important to remove as quickly as possible this dust, these spots, and restore to charity its fervor and radiation.

As a practical conclusion, let us consider how we can subordinate all our affections to the love of God. St. Francis de Sales tells us: "I can combat the desire of riches and mortal pleasures either by the scorn that they deserve or by the desire of immortal pleasures; and by this second means, sensual and earthly love will be destroyed by heavenly love. . . . Thus divine love supplants and subdues the affections and passions," [29] or places them at its service.

The love of conformity to the divine will leads to the love of complacency by which we rejoice over everything that contributes to the glory of God: we rejoice that He possesses infinite wisdom, limitless beatitude, that the whole universe is a manifestation of His goodness, and that the elect will glorify Him eternally. The love of complacency or of fruition is more particularly felt under a special inspiration of God: in this sense it is infused and passive; whereas the love of conformity of which we have spoken, may exist without this special inspiration, with common actual grace; from this point of view, it is called active.

For this reason certain authors have held that St. John of the Cross proposed in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* the union of the love of conformity as the end of the ascetical life, and in *The Dark Night* and *The Living Flame* the union of the passive love of enjoyment as the end of the mystical life.

We, as well as many contemporary writers,[30] think, on the con-

[27] Cf. St. Alphonsus Liguori, Opusc. *Uniformita alia volonta di Dio.*

[28] *se Simmta,* Ila llae, q.24, a. 10.

[29] *so Treatise on the Love of God,* Bk. XI, chap. 20.

[30] This opinion is held by Fathers Arintero, O.P., Gardeil, O.P., Msgr. A. Saudrcau, Father Gabriel of St. Magdalen, O.C.D., and several modern writers of the same Order; also by Father A. Rozwadowski, S.J.; cf. *La Vie spirituelle,* January, 1936, suppl. pp. [1]–L28].

trary, that St. John of the Cross preserves the unity of the spiritual life by speaking, in all his works, of only one end of the normal development of the life of grace on earth, and of only one union and transformation of love, which, it is true, presents itself under two aspects. The first of these aspects is the entire conformity of our will to the will of God; but this active gift of self is normally accompanied by the communication of the divine life passively received, which is the second aspect. Therefore the normal term of the spiritual life is a state at once ascetical and mystical, in which the perfection of active love, manifested by the virtues, is joined to infused or passive love, which leads the soul to the summit of union. The way leading to this union should, consequently, be not only active but also passive; it implies both the active purification described in *The Ascent* and the passive purification spoken of in *The Dark Night.* They are two aspects of purification: in other words, what the soul should do, and what it should receive and bear. Thus the unity of the spiritual life is maintained, and perfect union is the normal prelude of the life of heaven.[31]

[31] Cf. *infra,* chap. 29, for a discussion of the errors of the quietists in regard to contemplation and pure love.

CHAPTER XX

Fraternal Charity, Radiation of the Love of God

> "And the glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given to them; that they may be one, as We also are one."
>
> John 17:22

THE love of God, of which we have spoken, corresponds to the supreme precept; but there is a second precept which springs from the first: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," [1] for the love of God. The love of neighbor is presented to us by our Lord as the necessary consequence, the radiation, the sign, of the love of God: "Love one another as I have loved you. . . . By this shall all men know that you are My disciples." [2] St. John even says: "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." [3]

In the illuminative way of proficients, fraternal charity should therefore be one of the greatest signs of the progress of the love of God. Here we must insist on the formal motive for which charity should be practiced, so that it may not be confounded with, for example, simple amiability or natural comradeship, or with liberalism, which assumes the exterior appearances of charity but differs greatly from this infused virtue. Liberalism disregards the value of faith and of divine truth, whereas charity presupposes them as its basis. To see clearly the formal motive of fraternal charity, not only in a theoretical and abstract manner, but in a concrete and experimental manner, we shall examine why our love of God should extend to

[1] Matt. 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; John 13:34.
[2] John 13:34 f.
[3] Cf. I John 4:20.

our neighbor, and how actually to make progress in fraternal charity. That we may look at the matter from a supernatural point of view, we shall consider the love of Jesus for us.

Why Our Love of God Should Extend to Our Neighbor

Fraternal charity, which the Lord demands of us, differs immensely from the natural tendency which inclines us to do good in order to please others, which leads us also to love the kind, to hate those who do us evil, and to remain indifferent to others. Natural love makes us love our neighbor for his natural good qualities and for the benefits we receive from him; we find this love in good comradeship. The motive of charity is quite different and very much higher; the proof of it is in Christ's words: "Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you. . . . For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans this? . . . Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect." [4]

We should love our enemies with the same supernatural, theological love as we have for God; for there are not two virtues of charity, the one toward God, the other toward our neighbor. There is only one virtue of charity, the first act of which has God, loved above all else, as its object; and its secondary acts have ourselves and our neighbor as their object. Hence this virtue is very superior to the great virtue of justice, and not only to commutative and distributive justice, but to legal or social justice and to equity.

But how is it possible for us to have a divine love for men, who, like ourselves, are so often imperfect? Theology replies with St. Thomas® by a simple example: he who greatly loves his friend, loves the children of this friend with the same love; he loves them because he loves their father, and for his sake he wishes them well. For love of their father, he will, if necessary, come to their aid and pardon them if they have offended him.

4 Matt. 5:44, 46, 48.

1 *Summa,* IIa IIae, q.23, a.i ad 211m: "Indeed, so much do we love our friends, that for their sake we love all who belong to them, even if they hurt or hate us; so that, in this way, the friendship of charity extends even to our enemies, whom we love out of charity in relation to God, to whom the friendship of charity is chiefly directed."

Therefore, since all men are children of God by grace, or at least called to become so, we should love all men, even our enemies, with a supernatural love and desire the same eternal beatitude for them as for ourselves. We ought all to travel toward the same end, to make the same journey toward eternity, under the impulsion of the same grace, to live by the same love. Charity is thus a supernatural bond of perfection which unites us, as it should, to God and to our neighbor. It unites hearts at no matter what distance they may be; it leads us to love God in man and man in God.

The supernatural love of charity is rare among men because many seek their own interest primarily, and more readily comprehend the formula: "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."

The precept of fraternal charity was greatly neglected before the time of Christ; consequently He had to insist on it. He did so from the very beginning of His preaching in the Sermon on the Mount,® and He continually reverted to it, especially in His last words before He died.7 St. John, in his Epistles, and St. Paul repeatedly remind us of this precept. They show us that when charity enters the heart, it is followed by all the other virtues; it is meek, patient, and humble.8

But to love our neighbor supernaturally so far as he is the child of God or is called to become so, we must look upon him with the eyes of faith and tell ourselves that this person whose temperament and character are opposed to ours is "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but [as we are] of God," or called to be born of Him, to share in the same divine life, in the same beatitude as we. Especially in a Christian milieu, we can and ought to tell ourselves in regard to persons who are less congenial to us that their souls are, in spite of everything, temples of the Holy Ghost, that they are members of the mystical body of Christ, nearer perhaps to His heart than we are; that they are living stones whom God works that He may give them a place in the heavenly Jerusalem. How can we fail to love our neighbor, if we truly love God, our common Father? If we do not love our neighbor, our love of God is a lie. On the contrary, if we love him, it is a sign that we truly love God, the Author of the grace that vivifies us.

•Matt. 5:38-48.
' John 13:34; 15:12-17.
• Cf. I Cor. 13:4.

A young Jew whom we knew, the son of a Vienna banker, one day had the opportunity to take vengeance on his family's greatest enemy; as he was about to do so, he remembered the following words of Scripture, which he was in the habit of reading from time to time: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Then, instead of taking vengeance, he fully pardoned his enemy and immediately received the grace of faith. He believed in the entire Gospel, and a short time afterward entered the Church and became a priest and religious. The precept of fraternal charity had illumined him.

Even about an adversary we must tell ourselves that we can and ought to love him with the same supernatural, theological love as we have for the divine Persons; for we ought to love in him the image of God, the divine life that he possesses or is called to receive, his supernatural being, the realization of the divine idea which presides over his destiny, the glory which he is called to give to God in time and eternity.

The following objection has occasionally been raised against this lofty doctrine: But is this truly loving man; is it not loving God only in man, as one admires a diamond in a jewel-case? Man naturally wishes to be loved for himself, but as man he cannot demand a divine love.

In reality, charity does not love God only in man, but man in God, and man himself for God. It truly loves what man should be, an eternal part of the mystical body of Christ, and it does all in its power to make him attain heaven. It loves even what man already is through grace; and, if he has not grace, it loves his nature in him, not so far as it is fallen, unbalanced, unruly, hostile to grace, but so far as it is the image of God and capable of receiving the divine graft of grace that will increase its resemblance to God. In short, charity loves man himself, but for God, for the glory that he is called to give to God in time and eternity.

Efficacy of the Love of Charity

Whatever naturalism may say, in loving our neighbor in God and for God we do not love him less, we love him much more and far more perfectly. We do not love his defects; we put up with them;

but we love in man all that is noble in him, all in him that is called to grow and to blossom in eternal life.

Far from being a Platonic and inefficacious love of our neighbor, charity, in growing, disposes us to judge him well and to condescend to his wishes in whatever is not contrary to the commandments of God. Condescension thus born of charity makes indifferent things good, and the painful things that we impose on ourselves for our neighbor, fruitful. There is great charity in thus preserving union with all by avoiding clashes which might arise, or by effecting a reconciliation as soon as possible. Charity that grows has thus a radiating goodness; it makes us continually love not only what is good for us, but what is good for our neighbor, even for our enemies, and what is good from the superior point of view of God, by desiring for others the goods which do not pass, and especially the sovereign Good and its inamissible possession. St. Thomas sums up all this briefly: "Now the aspect under which our neighbor is to be loved, is God, since what we ought to love in our neighbor is that he may be in God. Hence it is clear that it is specifically the same act whereby we love God, and whereby we love our neighbor. Consequently the habit of charity extends not only to the love of God, but also to the love of our neighbor." [9]

Thus sight perceives light first of all and by it the seven colors of the rainbow. It could not perceive colors if it did not see light. Likewise we could not supernaturally love the children of God if we did not first supernaturally love God Himself, our common Father.[10]

Whereas justice inclines us to wish good to another inasmuch as he is another or distinct from us, charity makes us love him as "another self," an *alter ego,* with a love of truly supernatural friendship, as the saints in heaven love one another.

The Compass and Order of Charity

Therefore our charity should be universal: it should know no limits. It cannot exclude anyone on earth, in purgatory, or in heaven. It stops only before hell. It is only the damned that we cannot love,

[9] *Suwrma,* Ila Ilae, q.25, a. 1.
[10] Cf. *ibid.*

for they are no longer capable of becoming children of God. They hate Him eternally; they do not ask for pardon or for the grace to repent; hence they can no longer excite pity, for there is no longer in them the faintest desire to rise again. However, says St. Thomas, they are still the object of the divine mercy, in the sense that they are punished less than they deserve,[11] a fact that gladdens our charity, which extends even that far.

Beyond the certain fact of damnation (and we are not certain of the damnation of anyone, except that of the fallen angels and of the "son of perdition"), charity is due to all; it knows no limits, it is broad, in a sense, like the heart of God. We had examples of this breadth of charity in the first World War when, on the battle front, a French boy at the point of death finished the Hail Mary begun by a young German who had just died beside him. The Blessed Virgin reunited these two youths, in spite of the harsh opposition of the war, in order to introduce them both into the supernal fatherland.

To be universal, charity does not have to be equal for all, and its progress in the illuminative way shows increasingly better what is called the order of charity, which admirably respects and elevates the order dictated by nature. Thus we should love God efficaciously above all else, at least with a love of esteem, if not with a love that is felt. Next we should love our own soul, then that of our neighbor, and finally our body, which we should sacrifice for the salvation of a soul, especially when we are obliged by our office to provide for it, as happens to those who have charge of souls. The order of charity appears more clearly as this virtue grows in us. We understand better and better that among our neighbors we should have a greater love of esteem for those who are better, nearer to God, although we love with a more sensible love those who are nearest to us through blood, marriage, vocation, or friendship.[12] We also distinguish increasingly better the shades of the different friendships based on the bonds of family, country, or profession, or on bonds of an entirely spiritual order.[18]

The scale of values which appears more and more in this order of charity shows that God wishes to reign in our hearts, without excluding the legitimate affections which can and ought to be sub-

[11] Cf. la, q.zi, a.4 ad mm.
[11] *Summa,* Ila Ilae, q.26, a.7.
[*] *Ibid.,* ».8-12.

ordinated to the love we have for Him; then these affections are vivified, ennobled, purified, rendered more generous. Consequently the progress of charity does away with that *esprit de corps,* that collective egoism, that "nosism" which sometimes recalls painfully the chauvinism of certain narrow patriots who belittle their fatherland in their desire to magnify it. A spiritual daughter of St. Francis de Sales, Mother Louise de Ballon, who reformed the Bernardines and founded seventeen convents, used to say on this subject: "I can belong only to one order by profession and state; but I belong to all orders by inclination and love. . . . I confess ingenuously that I have always been afflicted at seeing monasteries envy each other . . . , at hearing some say that the good of the children of St. Augustine should not be for those of St. Benedict, and others say that the good of St. Benedict should not be given to the disciples of St. Bernard. Is it not the blood of Jesus Christ, and not that of St. Augustine, St. Benedict, or St. Bernard, which purchased for their religious all the good that they possess? O my Lord! Establish solidly a good understanding among Your servants. . . . The different orders are composed of different bodies, but they should have only one heart, only one soul, as it was written of the first Christians."[14]

Without this broad charity, we would fall into the defect, into the narrowness which St. Paul blamed in the Corinthians, some of whom said: "I indeed am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollo," to which the saint replied: "What then is Apollo, and what is Paul? The ministers of Him whom you have believed; and to everyone as the Lord hath given. I have planted, Apollo watered, but God gave the increase. Therefore, neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."[15]

In the same epistle the great Apostle writes: "Is Christ divided? Was Paul then crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" [18] "Let no man therefore glory in men. For all things are yours, whether it be Paul or Apollo or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; for all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's." [17]

Such indeed, above all individual or collective narrowness, is the

[14] Myriam de G., *Louise de Ballon, réformatrice des Bernardines,* 1935, p. 117.

[15] Cf. I Cor. 3:4-7.

[16] *Ibid.,* 1:13.

[17] *Ibid.,* 3:11-23.

admirable order of charity, as it should appear increasingly in the disinterested proficient, whose heart should enlarge in a sense, like the heart of God, by the very progress of charity, which is truly a participation in the divine life, in eternal love.

This growing charity ought to be not only affective but effective, not only benevolent but beneficent. The lives of the saints show that they understood the Master's words: "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." [18] Christ loved us even to the death of the cross; the saints loved their brethren even to the martyrdom of the heart, and often even to giving the testimony of their blood.

Such is fraternal charity, the extension or radiation of the love we should have for God. Similarly, humility in respect to our neighbor is the extension of the virtue that leads us to humble ourselves before God and before what is of God in all His works.

How to Make Progress in Fraternal Charity

Occasions of failing in fraternal charity present themselves only too often even in the best surroundings; first of all, because of the defects of all who, though tending to perfection, have not reached it. Each of us is like a truncated pyramid that has not yet its summit. Our neighbor often seems so to us, and we forget that we appear in like manner to him; we see the mote in our neighbor's eye, and do not see the beam in our own.

Moreover, if, by an impossibility, all our defects were suppressed before our entrance into heaven, occasions of clashes and offenses would still subsist because of the diversity of temperaments—bilious, nervous, lymphatic, or sanguine; by reason of the diversity of characters—some inclined to indulgence, others to severity; because of the diversity of minds—some inclined to view things as a whole, others in the minutest detail; by reason again of the difference in education; because of nervous fatigue; and finally because of the demon, who takes pleasure in causing division that he may destroy our Lord's work of truth, unity, and peace.

The devil intervenes more directly in certain excellent centers in order to obstruct the great good that might be done there. He seeks much more directly to disturb such groups than he does less good or

[18] John 15:12.

positively evil centers, where he already rules through the maxims there diffused and the examples found there. As we see in the Gospel and the lives of the saints, the enemy of souls sows cockle among the best, placing in imaginations, as it were, a magnifying glass which transforms a grain of sand into a mountain.

We should also keep in mind that Providence designedly leaves among the good many occasions for humility and for the exercise of fraternal charity. It is in weakness that the grace of God manifests its power and that our virtue is perfected; our weaknesses humiliate us, and those of others exercise us.

Only in heaven will every occasion of conflict completely disappear, because the blessed, illumined by the divine light, see in God all that they should think, will, and do. On earth the saints themselves may enter into conflict, and occasionally no one yields for some time, because each is persuaded in conscience that he must maintain his point of view; that he may indeed yield in regard to his rights, but not in respect to his obligations. The case of St. Charles Borromeo and of St. Philip Neri illustrates this point. They could not come to an agreement on the foundation of one order; and, as a matter of fact, in this case the Lord wished two religious families instead of one.

In the midst of so many difficulties, how should fraternal charity grow? It should grow especially in two ways: by benevolence and beneficence; that is, first by considering our neighbor in the light of faith that we may discover in him the life of grace, at least what is good in his nature; then by loving our neighbor effectively, and that in many ways: by putting up with his defects, rendering him service, returning good for evil, praying for union of minds and hearts.

First of all, we should view our neighbor in the light of faith that we may find in him the life of grace, or at least the image of God already graven in the very nature of his spiritual and immortal soul. Since charity, in its aspect as love of God, presupposes faith in God, in its aspect as love of neighbor it assumes that we consider him in the light of faith and not only in that of our eyes of flesh, or in that of a reason more or less deformed by egoism. We need a pure gaze fitted to see the divine life of others under an envelope that at times is thick and opaque. We see the supernatural being of our neighbor if we merit to do so, if we are detached from self.

In this connection we would do well to face the fact that often what irritates us against our neighbor is not serious sins against God, but rather defects of temperament which sometimes subsist despite real virtue. We would perhaps easily put up with sinners who are quite removed from God but naturally amiable, whereas advanced souls are occasionally very "trying" to us. We must, therefore, resolve to look at souls in the light of faith that we may discover in them what is pleasing to God, what He loves in them, and what we should love in them.

This higher light produces benevolence, whereas rash judgment most seriously opposes this benevolent view. For this reason Christ insists so strongly on this point in the Sermon on the Mount: "Judge not, that you may not be judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and seest not the beam that is in thy own eye? . . . Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thv own eye, and then shalt thou see to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." [18]

It should be clearly noted that rash judgment is not a simple unfavorable impression; it is a judgment. It consists in affirming evil on a slight indication; in reality a person sees two objects, but because of pride affirms that he sees four. If this judgment is fully deliberate and consented to in a serious matter, that is, judging one's neighbor guilty of a mortal sin, the one who judges, himself commits a mortal sin.[20] Consequently, says St. Thomas, if we cannot avoid certain suspicions, we should take care not to make a firm and definitive judgment on slight indications.[21]

18 Matt. 7:1-5.

20 Rash judgment must, therefore, be distinguished from rash doubt, suspicion, or opinion relative to the probity of another; an opinion of this kind is generally a venial sin. On the contrary, St. Thomas (Ila Ilae, q.6o, a. 3) says of rash judgment: "This is a mortal sin, if it be about a grave matter, since it cannot be without contempt of one's neighbor." Consequently, in doubtful matters he must be given the benefit of the doubt. Cf. Ila Ilae, q.6o, «•4·

21 However, without rashly judging a person who is somewhat suspect, one may take precautions to avoid being deceived by him in a case in which he would have a bad intention. Thus, without rashly judging his servants, a householder keeps certain precious articles under lock and key; and at times he intentionally leaves money on a table to sec if it will be taken.

Rash judgment, properly so called, is a sin against justice, especially when it is outwardly expressed by words or acts.[22] Our neighbor has, in fact, a right to his reputation; next to the right which he has to do his duty, he has the right to uphold his good name more than to defend the right to property. We should respect this right of others to their reputation if we wish our own to be respected.

Moreover, rash judgment is often false. How can we judge with certainty of the interior intentions of a person whose doubts, errors, difficulties, temptations, good desires, or repentance, we do not know? How can we claim to know better than he what he says to God in prayer? How can we judge justly when we do not have the details of the case?

Even if a rash judgment is true, it is a sin against justice because, in judging thus, a man arrogates to himself a jurisdiction which is not his to exercise. God alone is capable of judging with certainty the secret intentions of hearts, or those that are not sufficiently manifested. Hence even the Church does not judge them: "de internis non judicat."

Rash judgment is likewise a sin against charity. What is most serious in the eyes of God, is not that this hasty judgment is often false and always unjust, but that it proceeds from malevolence, though often expressed with the mask of benevolence, which is only a grimace of charity. Anyone judging rashly is not only a judge who arrogates to himself jurisdiction over the souls of his brothers which he does not possess, but a judge sold by his egoism and his pride, at times a pitiless judge, who knows only how to condemn, and who, though unaware of it, presumes to impose laws on the Holy Ghost, admitting no other way than his own. Instead of seeing in his neighbor a brother, a son of God, called to the same beatitude as he is, he sees in him only a stranger, perhaps a rival to supplant and humiliate. This defect withdraws many from the contemplation of divine things; it is a veil over the eyes of the spirit.

If we do not go so far, we may judge the interior life of a soul rashly in order to enjoy our own clear vision and to show it off. Let us remember that God alone sees this conscience openly. We should be on our guard and remember with what insistence Christ said: "Judge not." At the moment when we are judging rashly, we do not foresee that shortly afterward we shall perhaps fall into a more

[22] *Sunrma,* Ila Ilae, q.6o, a.3.

grievous sin than the one for which we reproached our neighbor. We see the mote in our neighbor's eye and do not see the beam in our own.

If the evil is evident, does God demand that we should not see it? No, but He forbids us to murmur with pride. At times, He commands us in the name of charity to practice fraternal correction with benevolence, humility, meekness, and discretion, as indicated in the Gospel of St. Matthew,[23] and as St. Thomas[24] explains it. We should see whether correction is possible and if there is hope for amendment, or whether it is necessary to have recourse to the superior that he may warn the guilty person.[25]

Finally, as St. Catherine of Siena says, when the evil is evident, perfection, instead of murmuring, has compassion on the guilty party; we take on ourselves, in part at least, his sin before God, following the example of our Lord who took all our sins upon Himself on the cross. Did He not say to us: "Love one another, as I have loved you"?[26]

We must, therefore, repress rash judgment that we may become accustomed to see our neighbor in the light of faith and to discover in him the life of grace, or at least his nature so far as it is an image of God that grace should ennoble.

It is not sufficient to look upon our neighbor benevolently; we must love him effectively. We can do this by bearing with his defects, returning him good for evil, avoiding jealousy, and praying for union of hearts.

We bear with another's defects more easily if we observe that often what arouses our impatience is not a serious sin in the eyes of God, but rather a defect of temperament: nervousness or, on the contrary, apathy, a certain narrowness of judgment, a frequent lack of tact, a certain way of putting himself forward, and other defects of this kind. Even if the defect is grave, we should not allow ourselves to go so far as to become irritated over evil that is permitted

[23] Matt. 18:15-17: "If thy brother shall offend against thee, go, and rebuke him between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother. And if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may stand. And if he will not hear them, tell the church."

[24] *Summa,* IIa IIae, q. 33, a. 1, 2.

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] John 13:34.

by God; and we should not allow our zeal to become bitterness. While complaining of others, let us not go so far as to persuade ourselves that we have realized the ideal. Without suspecting it, we would be uttering the prayer of the Pharisee.

To put up with the defects of another, we must remember that God permits evil only for a higher good. It has been said that God's business consists in drawing good from evil, whereas we can do good only with good. The scandal of evil, producing a bitter and indiscreet zeal, is responsible for the fruitlessness of many reforms. The truth should be told with measure and goodness and not spoken with contempt. We should also avoid indiscretion that leads to speaking without sufficient reason about the faults of one's neighbor, which is slander and may lead to calumny.

The Gospel tells us that not only must we bear with the defects of our neighbor, but also return good for evil by prayer, edification, and mutual assistance. It is related that one of the ways of winning the good graces of St. Teresa was to cause her pain. She really practiced the counsel of Christ: "If a man will contend with thee in judgment and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him." [27] Why should we do this? Because it is much less important to defend our temporal rights than to win the soul of our brother for eternity, than to lead him to the true life which has no end. In particular, prayer for our neighbor, when we have to suffer from him, is especially efficacious, as was that of Jesus for His executioners and that of St. Stephen, the first martyr, when he was being stoned.

We must also avoid jealousy, telling ourselves that we ought to enjoy in a holy manner the natural and supernatural qualities that the Lord has given to others and not to us. As St. Paul says: "If the foot should say: Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say: Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were the eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God hath set the members, every one of them, in the body as it hath pleased Him. And if they all were one member, where would be the body? But now there are many members indeed, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand: I need not thy help; nor again the head to the feet: I have no need of you. . . . But God

[27] Matt. 1:40.

hath tempered the body together . . . that there might be no schism in the body; but the members might be mutually careful one for another. And if one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it; or if one member glory, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members of member." [28] The hand benefits by what the eye sees; similarly we benefit by the merits of others. We should therefore rejoice in the good qualities of another instead of allowing ourselves to become jealous. We must exercise charity particularly toward inferiors who are weaker, and toward superiors who have greater burdens to bear. We must not emphasize their defects; were we in their place, we would perhaps do less well than they. But we must help them as much as possible in a discreet and, so to speak, unperceived manner.

Lastly, we must pray for union of minds and hearts. Praying for His disciples, Christ said: "The glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given to them; that they may be one, as We also are one." [29] In the primitive Church, the Acts tell us: "The multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but all things were common unto them."[80] As it spread over the world, the Church could not preserve such great intimacy among its members, but religious communities and Christian fraternities should remember the union of hearts in the early Church. In communities where there is common observance of life and prayers, this interior union must exist, otherwise observances and common prayer would be a lie to God, to men, and to ourselves. Union of hearts contributes to giving the Church the luster of the mark of sanctity, which presupposes unity of faith, worship, hierarchy, hope, and charity.

The radiating charity that unites the different members of the Savior's mystical body, in spite of diversity of ages, countries, temperaments, and characters, is a sign that the Word became flesh, that He came among us to unite us and to give us life. He Himself declares it in His sacerdotal prayer: "The glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given to them; that they may be one, as We also are one . . . , and the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast also loved Me." [81]

[28] Cf. I Cor. 12:15-21, 24-27.
[29] John 17:22.
[80] Acts 4:32.
[81] John 17:22 f.

CHAPTER XXI

Zeal for the Glory of God and the Salvation of Souls

> "I am come to cast fire on the earth: and what will I, but that it be kindled?"
>
> Luke 12:49

TO show what charity should normally be in the illuminative way of proficients, we shall discuss the zeal which every Christian, especially the priest and religious, should have for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. If this zeal is lacking, or does not exist in the degree that it should manifestly have, it is an additional and at times striking sign of what our love of God and souls should normally be, of what the living, profound, radiating knowledge of the things of God should also be in us. Those whose duty it is spiritually to feed others, themselves need a substantial daily food, that to be had every day in intimate participation in the Sacrifice of the Mass, in Communion, and in prayer.

We have seen that love of neighbor is the extension or the radiation of the love we should have for God: this love should extend to the children of God. It is one and the same supernatural theological love; it is essentially divine, like grace, a participation in the inner life of God. This love should become so ardent in a fervent Christian soul as to merit the name of zeal. Especially for a soul consecrated to God, it is a duty to have zeal for His glory and the salvation of one's neighbor. Basically it is one and the same zeal, the ardor of one and the same love, which should subsist, though not always sensible, in the midst of aridities and trials of all sorts, just as in the heart of a good soldier ardent love of country subsists in the most trying

hours when he can only be patient and endure. Zeal is the ardor of love, but of a spiritual love of the will, which is at times proportionately more generous and meritorious as it is less felt.[1]

We may with profit consider the motives of zeal, what its qualities should be, and the means to exercise it.

The Motives of Zeal

For every Christian the first motive of zeal is that God deserves to be loved above all things. This motive is not the object of a counsel, but of the supreme precept, which has no limits; it makes it our duty to grow continually in charity while on earth, to love the Lord with our whole heart, with our whole soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind.[2]*Even in the Old Testament the supreme precept was already formulated in the same terms.[3] We know what zeal in corresponding to it was shown by the prophets, whose mission it was ceaselessly to remind the people of God of their great duties. The Psalmist says to the Lord: "The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up: and the reproaches of them that reproach Thee are fallen upon me."[4]*"My zeal hath made me pine away: because my enemies forgot Thy words. . . . I am very young and despised; but I forget not Thy justifications."[5] Elias, reaching Mount Horeb and being questioned by God about what he had done, replies: "With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant: they have thrown down Thy altars, they have slain Thy prophets with the sword, and I alone am left, and they seek my life to take it

[1] *Sunnna,* la Ilae, q.28, a.4: "Zeal, whatever way we take it, arises from the intensity of love. . . . For in the love of concupiscence he who desires something intensely, is moved against all that hinders his gaining or quietly enjoying the object of his love. . . . Love of friendship seeks the friend's good: wherefore, when it is intense, it causes a man to be moved against everything that opposes the friend's good. . . . In this way, too, a man is said to be zealous on God's behalf, when he endeavors, to the best of his means, to repel whatever is contrary to the honor or will of God; according to III Kings 19:14: 'With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord . . . of hosts.' " Likewise, Ps. 68:10: "The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up." Cf. Ila Ilae, q. 36, a. 2.

[2] Luke 10:27.

[3] Deut. 6:5.

[4] Ps. 68:10.

[5] Ps. 118:139, 141.

away." ' It was then that the Lord told Elias that He was going to pass before him, and, after a violent wind and an earthquake accompanied by lightning, there was "the whistling of a gentle air," the symbol of the divine gentleness; then the Lord gave the prophet His orders, and revealed to him that Eliseus was called to succeed him.

Likewise we read in the first book of the Machabees that the priest Mathathias, exhorting his sons to begin the holy war, said: "Phinees our father, by being fervent in the zeal of God, received the covenant of an everlasting priesthood. . . . Elias, while he was full of zeal for the law, was taken up into heaven. . . . Daniel in his innocency was delivered out of the mouth of the lions. - - - You therefore, my sons, take courage, and behave manfully in the law; for by it you shall be glorious."[7]

This zeal led Jesus to cast the buyers and sellers out of the temple and to overthrow their tables, saying to them: "It is written: 'My house shall be called the house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves.' "[8] Especially after Pentecost, the apostles had this zeal; it led them all even to martyrdom. It still exists in the Church wherever the testimony of blood is given and in numerous lives consecrated to the service of God even to immolation. The first motive of zeal is, therefore, that God deserves to be loved above all and without measure.

The second motive of zeal is that we should imitate our Lord Jesus Christ. The predominant virtue of the Savior is zeal, the ardor of charity, as He Himself says: "I am come to cast fire [of charity] on the earth: and what will I, but that it be kindled?"[9] St. Paul writes: "Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith: 'Sacrifice and oblation [of the Old Law] Thou wouldest not: but a body Thou hast fitted to Me. . . . Then said I: Behold I come . . . that I should do Thy will, O God.' "[10] All during His life, our Lord offered Himself; at twelve years of age He announced that He came to be about His Father's business.[11] He offered Himself continually during His hidden life, showing us in what humility and abnegation truly divine works should be prepared. From the beginning

• Cf. III Kings 19:10.
r Cf. I Mach. 2:54-64.
• Matt. 21:13.
• Luke 12:49.
,0Hcb. 10:5-7·
11 Luke 2:49.

of His public life, He saw the indifference of the Jews of Nazareth, who called Him the son of the carpenter, and He experienced the hatred of the Pharisees, which would increase even to the point of demanding His death on the cross. The Word of God came among His own to save them, and many of His own were not willing to receive Him; they did not wish to let themselves be saved. Opposition came from those who should least have opposed Him, from the priests of the Old Law, the prelude of the New.[12] The suffering which this attitude caused the Savior was profound like His love of souls: it was the suffering of ardent and overflowing charity, which wishes to give itself and often meets only with indifference, inertia, lack of comprehension, ill will, and spiteful opposition.

This thirst for the glory of God and the salvation of souls was the great cause of the sorrow which the Savior experienced at the sight of the sins of men. It was also the cause of Mary's suffering at the foot of the cross.

All His life long Christ felt this desire for the salvation of souls and continually carried this cross of desire; He aspired strongly to realize His redemptive mission by dying for us on the cross. For this reason He said at the last supper the night before He died: "With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you, before I suffer";[13] and then instituting the Eucharist, He said: "This is My body, which is given for you. . . . This is the chalice, the new testament in My blood, which shall be shed for you."[14] Christ desired with a great desire the accomplishment of His mission by the perfect sacrifice of Himself, by the most complete gift of self.

The suffering that accompanied this ardent desire ceased with His death on the cross, but this desire, this thirst for our salvation, still endures; He is "always living to make intercession for us,"[15] [16]

[12] It is often thus. When a person is to glorify God greatly, not infrequently obstacles come from those who should have helped him. In the Old Testament we find an illustration of this point in the story of Joseph, who was sold by his brothers. Christ also said: "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house. And He wrought not many miracles there [in Nazareth], because of their unbelief" (Matt. 13:57 f.). "And a man's enemies shall be they of his own house" (Matt. 10:36); this saying was often verified during the three centuries of persecution of the primitive Church.

[13] Luke 22:15.

[14] *Ibid.,* 19 f.

[15] Heb. 7:25.

especially in the Sacrifice of the Mass, which continues sacramentally that of Calvary. In the Eucharist our Lord continues to make His appeals heard and to give Himself to souls, even to repentant prisoners and criminals sentenced to death.

This hunger and thirst for the salvation of sinners which is still living in the holy soul of Christ led St. Catherine of Siena to write to one of her spiritual sons: "I should like to see you suffer so greatly from hunger for the salvation of souls that you could die of it like Christ Jesus, that at least because of it you would die to the world and to yourself." Such thoughts are to be found on every page of this great saint's letters.

A third motive for our zeal is precisely the value of the immortal souls redeemed by the blood of Christ. Each of them is worth more than the entire physical universe, and each is called to receive the benefits of the redemption and eternal life. We should remember the zeal of the apostles who "went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus," [18] and who could say to the faithful, as St. Paul did: "I most gladly will spend and be spent myself for your souls; although loving you more, I be loved less." [17] Zeal prompted St. Paul to write: "We are buffeted, and have no fixed abode. . . . We are reviled, and we bless; we are persecuted, and we suffer it; we are blasphemed, and we entreat." [18] Zeal led the apostles even to martyrdom, and for three centuries after them the same was true of many bishops, priests, and laymen of every rank and age. The martyrs, whose heroism gave rise to numerous conversions, had such eminent zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls that it became an undeniable proof of the sanctity of the Church. If when a man's country is in danger he loves it to the extent that he will sacrifice himself for it, with what greater reason should we love the Church which leads us to the eternal country, where all the just of all peoples should meet.

Lastly, a fourth motive of our zeal is the contrary zeal with which the enemies of the Church toil at works of disorder, corruption, and death. What should draw us out of our somnolence, is the impious, spiteful, satanic war waged against our Lord and our holy Mother

ie Acts 5:41.
17 Cf. 11 Cor. 12:15.
'•Cf. I Cor. 4:11-13.

the Church; a war surpassing all others, a war of the spirit, which is carried on in the innermost depths of hearts, even in the souls of little children, whom they desire to snatch from our Lord that they may make them reprobates and atheists. This war is indescribably perverse like the sins of the spirit; it is loaded down with crushing responsibilities. The Church sees the formidable consequences of this struggle on those who are intent upon it; it continues to pray for them, that God may cure their blindness and halt them on the road of damnation, into which they are dragging so many others with them.

The principal motives of zeal are consequently: the glory of God, the imitation of our Lord, the salvation of souls, and the relief of the souls in purgatory.

The Qualities of Zeal

Zeal, according to its definition, should be ardent since it is the ardor of love; but here is meant enduring spiritual ardor, and not a sudden impetus, sensible enthusiasm of temperament, natural activity eager to take outward form through personal satisfaction and the seeking after self which wearies others. That it may not lose any of its spiritual ardor and may preserve it for a long time, zeal should be free from all excessively human self-seeking; to be so, it must be enlightened, patient, meek, and disinterested.

Zeal should, first of all, be illumined by the light of faith, by that of obedience and Christian prudence, and also by the gifts of wisdom and counsel. The light of natural reason does not suffice, for it is a question of performing not only a human work, but a divine work, of laboring at the salvation and sanctification of souls with the means indicated by our Lord. Zeal animated only by the natural spirit, instead of converting souls to God, gradually allows itself to be converted by the world, to be seduced by high-sounding phrases devoid of meaning. It dreams, for example, of a future city and loses sight of the supernatural end of the true city of God which St. Augustine speaks of. This zeal, which is that of restless, blundering, ambitious people, is impulsive, unseasonable, and inopportune; it forgets the indispensable, supernatural means, prayer and penance, recalled by Mary Immaculate at Lourdes.

Especially in difficult circumstances, zeal should beg the Holy Ghost for the light of the gift of counsel, not that it should propose to do extraordinary things, but to accomplish as perfectly as possible the ordinary duties fixed by the wisdom of the Church and obedience: to say Mass well or to unite oneself intimately to it, to be faithful to prayer under its different forms, and to one's duties of state. Sometimes heroic obedience may be demanded; should it be lacking, the greatest qualities of mind and heart would not suffice to compensate for its absence. Some servants of God, who were manifestly called to sanctity, seem not to have reached it because they lacked this heroic virtue.

Zeal should be not only enlightened, but also patient and meek. While preserving its ardor, and indeed in order to preserve it, zeal should avoid becoming uselessly irritated against evil, pouring itself out in vain indignation and sermonizing indiscriminately. The Gospel shows us that in the service of the Lord the Boanerges, or sons of thunder,[19] as James and John were, become meek. Zeal should know how to tolerate certain evils in order to avoid greater ones and not itself turn to bitterness. What is only less good should not be cast aside as evil; the smoking flax should not be extinguished nor the broken reed crushed. We should always remember that Providence permits evil in view of a superior good, which we often do not yet see, but which will shine forth on the last day under the light of eternity.

To be patient and meek, zeal should be disinterested, and that in two ways: by avoiding appropriating to self what belongs only to God and what pertains to others. Some people are zealous for the works of God, but, motivated by unconscious self-seeking, they consider these works too much as their own. As Tauler says, they resemble hunting dogs that are eager in running down the hare, but that eat it after catching it, instead of bringing it back to their master; thereupon he whips them soundly. Thus these people keep for themselves the souls which they should win for our Lord, and as a result God punishes them severely to teach them to efface themselves, that He may act in them and through them. When they are less sure of themselves, less persuaded of their importance, and somewhat broken or at least more supple, the Lord will use them as docile

19. Mark 3:17.

instruments. They will then completely forget themselves in the hands of the Savior, who alone knows what is necessary to regenerate souls.

Let us not appropriate what belongs to others. Often we wish to do good, but we desire too greatly that we should do it in our way. We should not wish to do everything, or hinder others from working and being more successful than we are. Let us not be jealous of their success. Above all, we ought not to take upon ourselves the direction of souls that have not been entrusted to us; we ought to be on our guard not to take them away from a salutary influence, for the Lord might require a severe accounting from us in this matter. It is for Him we are working and not for ourselves. This is what He wished to make His apostles understand one day when they had been disputing among themselves about which was the greatest. He then asked them: "What did you treat of in the way?" But they did not dare to reply, and it was then that, "calling unto Him a little child, [He] set him in the midst of them, and said: Amen I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." [20] He wished to make them understand that their zeal should be humble and disinterested.

He wished to convince particularly the sons of Zebedee, James and John, of this when their mother came to Him and asked for them the first two places in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said to them: "You know not what you ask. Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink? They say to Him: We can. He saith to them: My chalice indeed you shall drink; but to sit on My right or left hand, is not Mine to give to you, but to them for whom it is prepared by My Father. . . . And he that will be first among you, shall be your servant. Even as the Son of man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a redemption for many." [21] Thus our Lord taught the sons of Zebedee to dominate their natural ardor by humility and meekness, in order to transform it into a pure and fruitful supernatural zeal. Similarly He cures us sometimes by rebuffs and trials administered to our self-love and pride. He corrects us thus until we no longer wish to do our work; then, after permitting the lower part of our nature to be broken by events, and when

[20] Mark 9:32 f., and Matt. 18:2 f.
[21] Matt. 20:22 f., 27 f.

selfishness has been overcome, He makes use of us for His work, the salvation of souls. Then zeal, though it preserves its spiritual ardor, is calm, humble, and meek, like that of Mary and the saints, and nothing can any longer crush it: "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

This zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls should be exercised by the apostolate under various forms: the apostolate by the teaching of Christian doctrine and the spiritual and corporal works of mercy; the apostolate by prayer, which draws down divine grace to render fruitful the labor of those who toil in the Lord's vineyard. When profound, this hidden apostolate is the soul of the exterior apostolate. Lastly, there should also be the apostolate by reparatory suffering; hidden, too, like that of prayer, it continues, as it were, in the mystical body of Christ the sufferings of Jesus during the Passion and on the cross for the regeneration of souls. When, in the mystical body of Christ, a member voluntarily suffers through love, another infirm member is healed, as in our human body painful remedies relieve infected organs, which then gradually resume their functions. When the servants of God immolate their bodies and hearts, the Lord spares the body of an unfortunate person whose strength is spent, or cures a sick heart which had not the courage to break its chains. When in the mystical body a generous soul sacrifices its own will, in another the Lord revives a dead will and grants it the grace of conversion.

Such are the qualities of zeal, which is the ardor of charity, an enlightened, patient, meek, disinterested, and truly fruitful ardor that glorifies God, imitates our Lord, snatches souls from evil, and saves them.

It is clear that this zeal should exist, that too often it is lacking, and that it is in the normal way of sanctity. But to subsist, it should be kept up by profound prayer, by prayer that is continual and like an almost uninterrupted conversation of the soul with God in perfect docility. We shall now discuss this docility and this prayer of proficients; it is this prayer that gave its name to the illuminative way in which the soul is more and more penetrated by the light of God.

The Sources of Spiritual Progress and Divine Intimacy

What we have just said about the progress of the moral and theological virtues leads us to speak of the sources of spiritual progress and divine intimacy. We shall do so by treating of what docility to the Holy Ghost, the discerning of spirits, the Sacrifice of the Mass, Holy Communion, devotion to Mary, should be for proficients. We shall finish Part III by examining the questions relative to the passage from acquired prayer to initial infused prayer, to the nature of infused contemplation, and to its progress.

CHAPTER XXII

Docility to the Holy Ghost

HAVING spoken of the progress of the theological virtues in the illuminative way, we shall now treat of docility to the Holy Ghost who, through His seven gifts, is the Inspirer of our entire life with a view to contemplation and action.

Earlier in this work [1] we set forth the nature of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to the teaching of St. Thomas,[2] who considers them permanent infused habits, which are in every just soul that it may receive the inspirations of the Holy Ghost with promptness and docility. According to the fathers of the Church, the gifts are in the just soul like the sails on a vessel; the boat may advance by rowing, which is a slow and painful way of making progress; this is the symbol of the work of the virtues. It may also advance because a favorable wind swells its sails, which dispose it to receive, as it should, the impulsion of the wind. This analogy was indicated in a way by Christ Himself when He said: "The Spirit breatheth where He will; and thou hearest His voice, but thou knowest not whence He cometh and whither He goeth. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit."[3]

The gifts of the Holy Ghost have also been compared to the different strings of a harp which, under the hand of a musician, give forth harmonious sounds. Lastly, the inspirations of the gifts have been likened to the seven flames of the seven-branch candelabrum used in the synagogue.

These gifts, enumerated by Isaias and called by him "the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness, and . . . the spirit of the

[1] Cf. Vol. I, chap, j, a.4.
[2] *Summa,* la llae, q.68, a. 1, 2.
[3] John 3:8.

fear of the Lord,"[4] are granted to all the just, since the Holy Spirit is given to all according to these words of St. Paul: "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us."[5] The gifts of the Holy Ghost are consequently connected with charity,[6] and therefore they grow with it. They are like the wings of a bird that grow simultaneously, or like the sails of a ship that increasingly unfurl. By repeated venial sins, however, the gifts of the Holy Ghost are, as it were, bound; these habitual venial sins are like folds in the soul, which incline it to judge in an inferior manner with a certain blindness of spirit, which is the direct opposite of infused contemplation.[7] We shall discuss first the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, then the ascending gradation of the gifts, and finally the conditions required for docility to the Holy Ghost.

The Inspirations of the Holy Ghost

The special inspiration to which the gifts render us docile is, as we have explained,[8] quite different from common actual grace which leads us to the exercise of the virtues. Under common actual grace, we deliberate in a discursive or reasoned manner, for example, to *go to* Mass, or to say the Rosary at the accustomed hour. In this case we move ourselves by a more or less explicit deliberation to this act of the virtue of religion. Under a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, on the contrary, we are moved, for example, in the course of study, to pray in order to obtain light. Here there is no discursive deliberation, the act of the gift of piety is nof deliberate; but under the special inspiration it remains free, and the spirit of piety disposes us precisely to receive this inspiration with docility and therefore freely and with merit. St. Thomas distinguishes clearly between common actual grace and special inspiration when he shows the difference between cooperating grace, under which we are moved to act in virtue of an anterior act, and operating grace, by which we are moved to act by consenting freely to receive the impulsion of

[4] Isa. 11:2.
[5] Rom. 5:5.
[6] *Summa,* la Ilae, q.68, a. 5.
[7] Cf. Louis Lallemant, S.J., *La Doctrine spirituelle,* 4th principle, a. 3.
[8] Cf. Vol. I, chap. 3. a. 5, pp. 88-96: Actual grace, its various forms, the fidelity which it demands.

the Holy Ghost.[9] In the first case, we are more active than passive·, in the second, we are more passive than active, for it is more the Holy Ghost who acts in us.[10]

It happens, moreover, that under this special inspiration the gifts are exercised at the same time that the work of the virtues is done. Thus while the boat advances by rowing, there may be a slight breeze which facilitates the labor of the rower. Likewise the inspirations of the gifts may recall to our mind many principles from the Gospel at the time when our reason deliberates on a decision to be made. Inversely, our prudence sometimes recognizes its powerlessness to find the solution of a difficult case of conscience, and it then moves us to ask for the light of the Holy Ghost, whose special inspiration makes us see and accomplish what is fitting. We should be increasingly docile to Him.

The Ascending Gradation of the Gifts

These inspirations of the Holy Ghost are exceedingly varied, as is shown by the enumeration of the gifts in the eleventh chapter of Isaias, and their subordination starting with that of fear, the least elevated, up to that of wisdom, which directs all the others from above.[11] This gradation given by Isaias and explained by St. Au-

[9] *Summa,* Ia Ilae, q. 111, a. 2.

[10] Docility to the Holy Ghost is analogous to that of the perfectly obedient man toward his superior. He who obeys does not deliberate in order to determine what should be done, but he accepts promptly and freely in a meritorious manner the order given. His superior acts through him; he himself has the merit of obedience, which can increase his strength tenfold; for he cannot be deceived in obeying, and God will not refuse him the grace necessary for the fulfillment of the order received and accepted.

[11] On the subject of the Messias, we read in Isaias (11:2): "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him: the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness. And He shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord." At the end of verse two, instead of "the fear of the Lord" the Septuagint and the Vulgate place "piety," which has practically the same meaning, especially in the Old Testament, where the fear of the Lord is of great importance.

On Bhis gradation of the gifts, cf. St. Thomas, la Ilae, q.68, a.7; also St. Augustine, I, *De sermone Domini in monte,* chap. 4; St. Francis de Sales, *U ' Sermon pour le jour de la Pentecôte.*

St. I homas *(loc. cit.)* remarks on the subject of this ascending gradation, i hat the gifts of contemplation, which direct the others, are superior to them; but that, according to the classical enumeration which has its origin in the text of Isaias 11:2, the gifts of fortitude and counsel are superior to those of

gustine, St. Thomas, and later St. Francis de Sales, is like an ancient hymn replete with beautiful modulations, one of the leitmotifs of traditional theology. In this gradation we perceive a spiritual scale analogous to that of the seven principal notes of music.

The gift of fear is the first manifestation of the influence of the Holy Ghost in a soul that leaves off sin and is converted to God. It supplies for the imperfection of the virtues of temperance and of chastity; it helps us to struggle against the fascination of forbidden pleasures and against the impulses of the heart.[12]

This holy fear of God is the inverse of worldly fear, often called human respect. It is superior also to servile fear which, although it has a salutary effect on the sinner, has not the dignity of a gift of the Holy Ghost. Servile fear is that which trembles at the punishments of God; it diminishes with charity, which makes us consider God rather as a loving Father than as a judge to be feared.

Filial fear, or the gift of fear, dreads sin especially, more than the punishments due it. It makes us tremble with a holy respect before the majesty of God. At times the soul experiences this holy fear of offending God; occasionally the experience is so vivid that no meditation, no reading, could produce a like sentiment. It is the Holy Ghost who touches the soul. This holy fear of sin is "the beginning of wisdom," [13] for it leads us to obey the divine law in everything, which is wisdom itself. Filial fear increases with charity, like the horror of sin; in heaven, though the saints no longer have the fear of offending God, they still have the reverential fear which makes the angels themselves tremble before the infinite majesty of God, "tremunt potestates," in the words of the preface of the Mass. This fear was even in the soul of Christ and still remains there.[14]

This fear of sin, which inspired the great mortifications of the saints, corresponds to the beatitude of the poor: blessed are they who through fear of the Lord detach their hearts from the pleasures

knowledge and piety, for fortitude and counsel are given for difficult things, whereas knowledge and piety are for common things. In Isaias 11:2, the gifts are enumerated according to a descending gradation which reminds us of that of the petitions in the Our Father, whereas in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5), the beatitudes which correspond to diem are enumerated according to an ascending gradation.

[12] *Summa,* IIa IIae, q. 19.

[13] Ps. 110:10.

[14] *Summa,* IIIa, q.7, a.6.

of the world, from honors; in their poverty they are supematurally rich, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Fear has a negative element, making us flee from sin; but the soul needs a more filial attitude toward God. The gift of piety inspires us precisely with a wholly filial affection for our Father in heaven, for Christ our Savior, for our Mother, the Blessed Virgin, for our holy protectors.[15] This gift supplies for the imperfection of the virtue of religion, which renders to God the worship due Him, in the discursive manner of human reason illumined by faith. There is no spiritual impulse and no lasting fervor without the gift of piety, which hinders us from becoming attached to sensible consolations in prayer and makes us draw profit from dryness, aridities, which are intended to render us more disinterested and spiritual. St. Paul writes to the Romans: "You have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father). . . . Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings." [16] By this gift we find a supernatural sweetness even in our interior sufferings; it is particularly manifest in the prayer of quiet, in which the will is captivated by the attraction of God, although the intellect often has to struggle against distractions. By its sweetness this gift makes us resemble Christ, who was meek and humble of heart. Its fruit, according to St. Augustine, is the beatitude of the meek, who shall possess the land of heaven. St. Bernard and St. Francis de Sales excelled in the gift of piety.

But to have a solid piety that avoids illusion and dominates the imagination and sentimentalism, the Holy Ghost must give us the higher gift of knowledge.

The gift of knowledge renders us docile to inspirations superior to human knowledge and even to reasoned theology. We are here concerned with a supernatural feeling that makes us judge rightly of human things, either as symbols of divine things, or in their opposition to the latter.[17] It shows us vividly the vanity of all passing things, of honors, titles, the praises of men; it makes us see espe-

[15] *Ibid.,* Ila Ilae, q. 121.

[16] Rom. 8:15, *16.*

[17] *Summa,* Ila Ilae, q.9. By the gift of knowledge, certain saints, like St. I'rancis of Assisi, see particularly how sensible things are the symbol of spiritual things. By this same gift, others, like the author of *The Imitation,* sec in a striking manner the emptiness of created things.

cially the infinite gravity of mortal sin as an offense against God and a disease of the soul. It throws light particularly on what in the world does not come from God, but from defectible and deficient second causes; in this it differs from the gift of wisdom. By showing the infinite gravity of mortal sin, it produces not only fear but horror of sin and a great sorrow for having offended God.

It gives the true knowledge of good and evil, and not that which the devil promised to Adam and Eve when he said to them: "In what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened: and you shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil." As a matter of fact, they had the bitter knowledge or experience of evil committed, of proud disobedience, and of its results. The Holy Ghost, on the other hand, promises the true knowledge of good and evil; if we follow Him, we shall be in a sense like God, who knows evil to detest it and good to realize it.

Only too often human knowledge produces presumption; the gift of knowledge, on the contrary, strengthens hope because it shows us that every human help is fragile as a reed; it makes us see the nothingness of earthly goods and leads us to desire heaven, putting all our confidence in God. As St. Augustine says, it corresponds to the beatitude of the tears of contrition. Blessed are they who know the emptiness of human things, especially the gravity of sin; blessed are they who weep for their sins, who have true cofnpunction of heart, of which *The Imitation* often speaks. By this gift we find the happy mean between a discouraging pessimism and an optimism made up of levity and vanity. Precious knowledge of the saints possessed by all great apostles: St. Dominic, for example, often wept on seeing the state of certain souls to which he brought the word of God.

Above the gift of knowledge, according to the enumeration of Isaias, comes the gift of fortitude. Why does the prophet place fortitude above knowledge? Because to be able to discern good and evil is not sufficient; we need strength to avoid the one and practice the other perseveringly without ever becoming discouraged. We must undertake a war against the flesh, the spirit of the world, and the spirit of evil, which is at times exceedingly afflictive. We have powerful, subtle, perfidious enemies. Shall we let ourselves be intimidated by certain worldly smiles, by a thoughtless speech? If we yield on this point, we shall fall into the snares of him who wishes our

damnation and who struggles so much the more desperately against us as our vocation is higher.[18]

The gift of fortitude strengthens our courage in danger, and comes to the help of our patience in long trials. It is this gift that sustained the martyrs, that gave invincible constancy to children, to Christian virgins, like Agnes and Cecilia, to St. Joan of Arc in her prison and on her pyre. It corresponds, says St. Augustine, to the beatitude of those who hunger and thirst after justice in spite of all contradictions, of those who preserve a holy enthusiasm that is not only sensible, but spiritual and supernatural, even in the midst of persecution. It gave the martyrs of the early Church a holy joy in their torments.[19]

But in difficult circumstances, in which the lofty acts of the gift of fortitude are exercised, we must avoid the danger of temerity which distinguishes fanatics. To avoid this danger, we need a higher gift, that of counsel.

The gift of counsel supplies for the imperfection of the virtue of prudence, when prudence hesitates and does not know what decision to make in certain difficulties, in the presence of certain adversaries. Must we still preserve patience, show meekness, or, on the contrary, give evidence of firmness? And, in dealing with clever people, how can we harmonize "the simplicity of the dove and the prudence of the serpent"? [20]

In these difficulties, we must have recourse to the Holy Ghost who dwells in us. He will certainly not turn us away from seeking counsel from our superiors, our confessor, or director; on the contrary, He will move us to do so, and then He will fortify us against rash impulsiveness and pusillanimity. He will make us understand also what a superior and a director would be incapable of telling us, especially the harmonizing of seemingly contradictory virtues: prudence and simplicity, fortitude and meekness, frankness and

*· St. Paul refers evidently to the gift of fortitude when he says (Eph. 6: 10-13): "Be strengthened in the Lord and in the might of His power. Put you on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not [only] against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places. Therefore take unto you the armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect."

18 *Summa,* IIa IIae, q. «39, a. 1, 2.

19 *Ibid.,* q.52, a. 1-4.

reserve. The Holy Ghost makes us understand that we should not say something that is more or less contrary to charity; if, in spite of His warning, we do so, not infrequently it produces disorder, irritation, great loss of time, to the detriment of the peace of souls. All of this might easily have been avoided. The enemy of souls, on the contrary, exerts himself to sow cockle, to cause confusion, to transform a grain of sand into a mountain; he makes use of petty, almost imperceptible trifles, but he achieves results with them as a person does who puts a tiny obstacle in the movement of a watch in order to stop it.

Sometimes it is these trifles that arrest progress on the way of perfection; the soul is held captive by inferior things as by a thread which it has not the courage to break: for example, by a certain habit contrary to recollection or humility, to the respect due to other souls, which are also the temples of the Holy Ghost. All these obstacles are removed by the inspirations of the gift of counsel, which corresponds to the beatitude of the merciful. These last are, in fact, good counselors who forget themselves that they may encourage the afflicted and sinners.

As the gift of counsel is given to us to direct our conduct by supplying for the imperfection of prudence, which would often remain hesitant, we need a superior gift to supply for the imperfection of faith. This virtue attains the mysteries of the inner life of God only by the intermediary of abstract and multiple formulas which we should like to be able to sum up in a single one that would express more exactly what the living God is for us.

Here the gift of understanding comes to our assistance by a certain interior light that makes us penetrate the mysteries of salvation and anticipate all their grandeur.[21] Without this light, it happens often that we hear sermons, read spiritual books, and yet remain in ignorance of the deep meaning of these mysteries of life. They remain like sacred formulas preserved in the memory, but their truth does not touch our soul; it is pale and lusterless, like a star lost in the depths of the heavens. And because we are not sufficiently nourished with these divine truths, we are more or less seduced by the maxims of the world.

On the contrary, a simple soul prostrate before God, will understand the mysteries of the Incarnation, the redemption, the Eucharist, not to explain them, to discuss them, but to live by them. It is the

[21] *Ibid.,* IIa IIae, q.8, a. i, 4, 6, 7.

Holy Ghost who gives this penetrating and experimental knowledge of the truths of faith which enables the soul to glimpse the sublime beauty of Christ's sermons. It is He also who gives souls the profound understanding of their vocation and preserves them in this regard from every failure in judgment.

The gift of understanding cannot exist in a high degree without great purity of heart, of intention; it corresponds, according to St. Augustine, to the beatitude: "Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God." Even here on earth they begin to glimpse Him in the words of Scripture, which at times are illumined for them as if underscored by a line of light. St. Catherine of Siena and St. John of the Cross excel in this understanding of the mysteries of salvation that they may make us comprehend the plenitude of life contained in them.

The gift of wisdom is finally, according to the enumeration of Isaias, the highest of all, as charity, to which it corresponds, is the loftiest of the virtues. Wisdom appears eminently in St. John, St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Thomas. It leads them to judge all things by relation to God, the first Cause and last End, and to judge them thus, not as acquired theology does, but by that connaturalness or sympathy with divine things which comes from charity. By His inspiration, the Holy Ghost makes use of this connaturalness to show us the beauty, the sanctity, and the radiating plenitude of the mysteries of salvation, which correspond so well to our deepest and highest aspirations.[22] Opposed to wisdom is spiritual folly, *stultitia,* of which St. Paul often speaks.[23]

From this higher point of view, it becomes evident that a number of learned men are mad in their vain learning, when, for example, in discussing the origins of Christianity, they wish to deny the supernatural at any cost; they fall into manifest absurdities. In a less inferior degree, believers who are instructed in their religion but whose judgment is faulty take scandal at the mystery of the cross which continues in the life of the Church.[24] They do not have a sufficiently clear perception of the value of supernatural means, of

[22] *Ibid.,* q.45, a. i, 2, 5, 6.

[23] *Ibid.,* q.46, *De stultitia,* a. 1, 2.

[24] Christ said (Matt. 11:6): "Blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in Me." The aged Simeon also declared (Luke 2:34): "This Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted." Cf. Bossuet, *Elévations sur les mystères,* 18e semaine, for splendid meditations on these words of the holy aged Simeon.

prayer, the sacraments, trials borne with love; they are too much preoccupied with human culture and occasionally confound liberalism and charity, as others confound narrowness and firmness in faith. This is a lack of wisdom.[25]

The gift of wisdom, the principle of a living contemplation that directs action, enables the soul to taste the goodness of God, to see it manifested in all events, even in the most painful, since God permits evil only for a higher good, which we shall see later and which it is sometimes given us to glimpse on earth. The gift of wisdom thus makes us judge everything in relation to God; it shows the subordination of causes and ends or, as they say today, the scale of values. It reminds us that all that glitters is not gold and that, on the contrary, marvels of grace are to be found under the humblest exteriors, as in the person of St. Benedict Joseph Labre or Blessed Anna Maria Taïgi. This gift enables the saints to embrace the plan of Providence with a gaze entirely penetrated with love; darkness does not disconcert them for they discover in it the hidden God. As the bee knows how to find honey in flowers, the gift of wisdom draws lessons of divine goodness from everything.

Wisdom reminds us, as Cardinal Newman says, that: "A thousand difficulties do not make a doubt" so long as they do not impair the very basis of certitude. Thus many difficulties which subsist in the interpretation of several books of the Old Testament or of the Apocalypse do not make a doubt as to the divine origin of the religion of Israel or of Christianity.

The gift of wisdom thus gives the supernaturalized soul great peace, that is, the tranquillity of the order of things considered from

25 The value of supernatural wisdom appears rather frequently by the contrast of certain judgments. For example, when a presumptuous young man puts on the airs of a critic or of a man of broad study and says with affected calm: "There is a much read book, *The Imitation,* which does great harm by its spirit which is opposed to study," we have a striking case of that spiritual folly to which St. Thomas devoted the question in his *Summa,* which follows the articles on the gift of wisdom. When *The Imitation* (Bk. Ill, chap. 43) says that study which is not ordained to God and the salvation of souls, but to vain self-content, is nothing in comparison with the wisdom of the saints, it simply affirms the rights of God, our sovereign Good and last End, and His infinite superiority to every purely human end. St. Thomas speaks in like manner in his commentary on Matt. 7:26, apropos of "A foolish man that built his house upon the sand": "Some hear that they may know (not that they may do and love), and these build on the intellect (only), and this is a building on sand . . . (one must build) on charity."

God's point of view. Thereby this gift, says St. Augustine, corresponds to the beatitude of the peacemakers, that is to say, of those who remain in peace when many are troubled and who are capable of bringing peace to the discouraged. This is one of the signs of the unitive life.

How is it possible that so many persons, after living forty or fifty years in the state of grace, receiving Holy Communion frequently, give almost no indication of the gifts of the Holy Ghost in their conduct and actions, take offense at a trifle, show great eagerness for praise, and live a very natural life? This condition springs from venial sins which they often commit without any concern for them; these sins and the inclinations arising from them lead these souls toward the earth and hold the gifts of the Holy Ghost as it were bound, like wings that cannot spread. These souls lack recollection; they are not attentive to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, which pass unperceived. Consequently they remain in obscurity, not in the darkness from above, which is that of the inner life of God, but in the lower obscurity which comes from matter, from inordinate passions, sin, and error; this is the explanation of their spiritual inertia. To these souls are addressed the words of the Psalmist, which the Divine Office places before us daily at Matins: "Today if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts." [26]

Conditions Required for Docility to the Holy Ghost

To be docile to the Holy Ghost, we must first hear His voice. To do so, recollection, detachment from the world and from self are necessary, as are the custody of the heart, the mortification of self-will, and personal judgment. If silence does not reign in our soul, if the voice of excessively human affections troubles it, we cannot of a certainty hear the inspirations of the interior Master. For this reason the Lord subjects our sensible appetites to severe trials and in a way crucifies them that they may eventually become silent or fully submissive to our will animated by charity. If we are ordinarily preoccupied with ourselves, we shall certainly hear ourselves or perhaps a more perfidious, more dangerous voice which seeks to lead us astray. Consequently our Lord invites us to die to ourselves like the grain of wheat placed in the ground.

[26] Ps. 94:8.

To hear the divine inspirations, we must, therefore, create silence in ourselves; but even then the voice of the Holy Ghost remains mysterious. As Christ says: "The Spirit breatheth where He will; and thou hearest His voice, but thou knowest not whence He cometh and whither He goeth. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit." [27] Mysterious words, which should make us prudent and reserved in our judgments about our neighbor, attentive to the attractions placed in us by the Lord, which are the mixed seed of a future known to divine Providence. They are attractions toward renunciation, toward interior prayer; they are more precious than we think. Some intellectuals from an early age have an attraction to silent mental prayer, which alone perhaps will preserve them from spiritual pride, from dryness of heart, and will make their souls childlike, such as they must be to enter the kingdom of God, and especially the intimacy of the kingdom. A vocation to a definite religious order may often be recognized by these early attractions.

The voice of the Holy Ghost begins, therefore, by an instinct, an obscure illumination, and if one perseveres in humility and conformity to the will of God, this instinct manifests its divine origin clearly to the conscience while remaining mysterious. The first gleams will become so many lights which, like the stars, will illumine the night of our pilgrimage toward eternity; the dark night will thus become luminous and like the aurora of the life of heaven, "and night shall be my light in my pleasures." [28]

To succeed in being docile to the Holy Ghost, we need, therefore, interior silence, habitual recollection, attention, and fidelity.

Acts Which Prepare the Soul for Docility to the Holy Ghost

We dispose ourselves to docility to the Holy Ghost by three principal acts: (i) By obeying faithfully the will of God which we already know through the precepts and the counsels proper to our vocation. Let us make good use of the knowledge that we have; God will give us additional knowledge. (2) By frequently renewing our resolution to follow the will of God in everything. This good resolution thus renewed draws down new graces on us. We

[27] John 3:8.
[28] Ps. 138:11.

should often repeat Christ's words: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." [29] (3) By asking unceasingly for the light and strength of the Holy Ghost to accomplish the will of God. We may with profit consecrate ourselves to the Holy Ghost, when we feel the attraction to do so, to place our soul more under His dominion and, as it were, in His hand. We may make this consecration in the following terms: "O Holy Ghost, divine Spirit of light and love, I consecrate to Thee my mind, my heart, my will, and my whole being for time and eternity. May my mind be ever docile to Thy celestial inspirations and to the teaching of the holy Catholic Church of which Thou art the infallible Guide. May my heart be always inflamed with love of God and of my neighbor. May my will be ever conformed to the divine will, and may my whole life be a faithful imitation of the life and virtues of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom, with the Father and Thee, O Holy Ghost, be honor and glory forever." [80]

St. Catherine of Siena used to pray: "O Holy Ghost, come into my heart; by Thy power, O God, draw me to Thyself and grant me charity with filial fear. Keep me, O ineffable Love, from every evil thought; warm and kindle me with Thy sweetest love, and every suffering will seem light to me. My Father, my sweet Lord, help me in all my actions. O Jesus love, O Jesus love!"

This consecration is also admirably expressed in the beautiful sequence:

Veni, Sancte Spiritus,
Et emitte coelitus
Lucis tuae radium.

When such a consecration is made with a great spirit of faith, its effect may be most profound. Since a fully deliberate pact with the devil brings in its wake so many disastrous effects in the order of evil, an act of consecration to the Holy Ghost can produce greater ones in the order of good, for God has more goodness and power than the devil has malice.

Consequently the Christian who has consecrated himself to Mary Mediatrix, for example, according to the formula of St. Grignion de Montfort, and then to the Sacred Heart, will find treasures in the

[29] John 4:34.

[80] This act of consecration to the Holy Ghost was enriched with an indulgence of 300 days by His Holiness Pius X.

often renewed consecration to the Holy Ghost. All Mary's influence leads us to the intimacy of Christ, and the humanity of the Savior leads us to the Holy Ghost, who introduces us into the mystery of the adorable Trinity. We may fittingly make this consecration at Pentecost and renew it frequently.

Especially when difficulties arise, when most important actions are being changed, we must ask for the light of the Holy Ghost, sincerely wishing only to do His will. This done, if He does not give us new lights, we shall continue to do what will seem best to us. Therefore, at the opening assemblies of the clergy and of religious chapters, the assistance of the Holy Ghost is invoked by votive Masses in His honor.

Lastly we should note exactly the different movements of our soul in order to discover what comes from God and what does not. Spiritual writers generally say that God's action in a soul submissive to grace is ordinarily characterized by peace and tranquillity; the devil's action is violent and accompanied by disturbance and anxiety.

The Harmonizing of Docility to the Holy Ghost with Obedience and Prudence

The first Protestants wished to regulate everything by private inspiration, subjecting to it even the Church and its decisions. For the true believer, however, docility to the interior Master admits nothing contrary to the faith proposed by the Church and to its authority; on the contrary, it tends only to perfect faith and the other virtues.

Likewise the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, far from destroying the obedience due to superiors, aids and facilitates its practice. Inspiration should be understood with the implied condition that obedience enjoins nothing contrary to it.

In the words of Father Lallemant, S.J.: "The only thing to be feared is that superiors may sometimes follow human prudence excessively, and that for want of discernment they may condemn the lights and inspirations of the Holy Ghost, treating them as illusions and reveries, and prescribe for those to whom God communicates Himself by such favors as if they were invalids. In this case, a person should still obey, but God will one day correct the error of these

rash spirits and teach them to their cost not to condemn His graces without understanding them and without being qualified to pass judgment on them.'"[31]

Neither should it be said that docility to the Holy Ghost renders useless the deliberations of prudence or the counsel of experienced people. The interior Master tells us, on the contrary, to be attentive to what we can see for ourselves; He also invites us to consult enlightened persons, but adds that we should at the same time have recourse to Him. As St. Augustine says: "God orders us to do what we can, and to ask for the grace to accomplish what we cannot do by ourselves." The Holy Ghost sent even St. Paul to Ananias to learn from him what he was to do. This docility then harmonizes perfectly with obedience, prudence, and humility; it even greatly perfects these virtues.

The Fruits of Docility to the Holy Ghost

All our perfection most certainly depends on this fidelity. According to Father Lallemant: "Some have many beautiful practices and perform a number of exterior acts of virtue; they give themselves wholly to the material action of virtue. Such a way of living is good for beginners; but it belongs to a far greater perfection to follow one's interior attraction and to regulate one's conduct by its movement."[32] Were we to apply ourselves to purifying our heart, to eliminating what is opposed to grace, we would arrive twice as soon at perfection. We read in the same chapter:

The end to which we should aspire, after we have for a long time exercised ourselves in purity of heart, is to be so possessed and governed by the Holy Ghost that He alone will direct all our powers and senses, regulate all our interior and exterior movements, and that we may surrender ourselves entirely by a spiritual renunciation of our will arid our own satisfaction. Thus we will no longer live in ourselves, but in Jesus Christ, by a faithful correspondence with the operations of His divine

[31] *La Doctrine spirituelle,* 4th principle, chap. 1, a.3. Father Lallemant adds *(ibid.):* "What renders them incapable of judging rightly of these things, is that they are entirely exterior souls, completely engrossed in external activity and with only a meager spiritual life, never having risen above the lowest degrees of mental prayer. And what leads them to judge these things is that they do not wish to appear ignorant in these matters, of which, nevertheless, they have neither experience nor knowledge."

[32] *Ibid.,* chap. 2.

Spirit and by a perfect subjection of all our rebellious movements to the power of grace.

Few persons attain the graces that God destined for them, or, having once lost them, succeed later in repairing their loss. The majority lack the courage to conquer themselves and the fidelity to use the gifts of God with discretion.

When we enter on the path of virtue, we walk at first in darkness, but if we faithfully and constantly followed grace, we would infallibly reach great light both for ourselves and for others. . . .

Sometimes, after receiving a good inspiration from God, we immediately find ourselves attacked by repugnances, doubts, perplexities, and difficulties which spring from our corrupted nature and from our passions, which are opposed to the divine inspiration. If we received it with full submission of heart, it would fill us with the peace and consolation which the Holy Ghost brings with Him. . . .

It is of faith that the least inspiration of God is more precious and more excellent than the whole world, since it belongs to a supernatural order and cost the blood and the life of a God.

What stupidity! We are insensible to the inspirations of God because they are spiritual and infinitely elevated above the senses. We do not pay much attention to them, we prefer natural talents, brilliant positions, the esteem of men, our little comforts and satisfactions. Prodigious illusion from which, nevertheless, a number are undeceived only at the hour of death!

Then in practice we take away from the Holy Ghost the direction of our soul and, though its center is made for God alone, we fill it with creatures to His prejudice; and instead of dilating and enlarging it infinitely by the presence of God, we contract it exceedingly by occupying it with some wretched little nothings. That is what hinders us from attaining perfection.8'

On the contrary, says the same author, docility to the Holy Ghost would show us that He is truly the Consoler of our souls in the uncertainty of our salvation, in the midst of the temptations and tribulations of this life, which is an exile.

We need this consolation because of the uncertainty of our salvation in the midst of the snares which surround us, of all that can make us deviate from the right road. Strictly speaking, we cannot merit final perseverance, for it is nothing else than the state of grace at the very moment of death, and grace, being the principle of merit,

" *Ibid.,* a. I, 3.

cannot be merited.[84] Therefore we need the direction, protection, and consolation of the Holy Ghost, who "giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God." [85] He gives us this testimony by the filial affection for God which He inspires in us. He is thus "the pledge of our inheritance." [88]

We also need the Holy Ghost to console us in the temptations of the devil and the afflictions of this life. The unction which He pours into our souls sweetens our sorrows, strengthens our wavering wills, and makes us at times find a true, supernatural savor in crosses.

Lastly, as Father Lallemant says so well: "The Holy Ghost consoles us in our exile on earth, far from God. This exile causes an inconceivable torment in holy souls, for these poor souls experience in themselves a sort of infinite void, which we have in ourselves and all creation cannot fill, which can be filled only by the enjoyment of God. While they are separated from Him, they languish and suffer a long martyrdom that would be unbearable to them without the consolations which the Holy Ghost gives them from time to time. . . . A single drop of the interior sweetness that the Holy Ghost pours into the soul, ravishes it out of itself and causes a holy inebriation." [87] Such is indeed the profound meaning of the name given to the Holy Ghost: Paraclete or Comforter.

On the subject of the ascending gradation of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, which we discussed in this chapter, we should note the following important statement made by St. John of the Cross. It throws great light on the unitive way, which we shall discuss farther on. Treating of the transforming union, the mystical doctor wrote in *A Spiritual Canticle of the Soul:* "The cellar is the highest degree of love to which the soul may attain in this life, and is therefore said to be the inner. It follows from this that there are other cellars not so interior; that is, the degrees of love by which souls reach this, the last. These cellars are seven in number, and the soul has entered into them all when it has in perfection the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, so far as it is possible for it. . . . The last and inmost cellar is entered by few in this world, because therein is·*

·* St. Thomas, la Ilae, q. 114, a. 9.
"· Rom. 8:16.
·' Eph. 1:14.
*' *Op. cit.,* 4th principle, chap. 2, art. 4.

wrought the perfect union with God, the union of the spiritual marriage." [88]

These lines of St. John of the Cross express as clearly as possible the doctrine which we set forth in the course of this entire work on the full development of the life of grace.

[88] Stanza 26, par. 2 f.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Discerning of Spirits

DOCILITY to the Holy Ghost, which we spoke of in the preceding chapter, requires, as we said, interior silence, habitual recollection, and the spirit of detachment in order to hear His inspirations, which at first are similar to a secret instinct that increasingly manifests its divine origin if we are faithful to it. This docility also requires that the inspirations of the Holy Ghost be discerned from those which might lead us astray, from those of two other spirits or inspirations, which may at first appear good, but which lead to death. The discerning of spirits is, consequently, a subject we should consider.

By the discerning of spirits may be understood one of the *gratiae gratis datae,* mentioned by St. Paul,[1] by which the saints occasionally discern at once whether, for example, a person is speaking or acting through the spirit of true charity or only simulating this virtue. But by the discerning of spirits may also be meant a wise discretion proceeding from infused prudence with the cooperation of acquired prudence and the higher help of the gift of counsel and of the graces of state granted to the spiritual director who is faithful to his duties. It is with this second meaning that we shall discuss the discerning of spirits.

This question was treated by St. Anthony the hermit, patriarch of monks; [2] by St. Bernard in his thirty-third Sermon; by Cardinal Bona,[3] by St. Ignatius,[4] by Scaramelli,[5] and many other writers

[1] Cf. I Cor. it: 10.

[2] Cf. *PG,* XXVI, 894 f.; St. Athanasius, *Life of St. Anthony.* Cf. *Dictionnaire de spiritualité,* "Antoine," by Bardy. It is generally recognized that St. Anthony described the rules for the discerning of spirits with a precision which equals that of St. Ignatius.

[3] *De discretione spirituum,* chap. 6.

[4] *The Spiritual Exercises,* 4th week.

[5] *Discemimento de' spiriti.*

who draw their inspiration from those who preceded them.

By spirit is meant the tendency to judge, will, or act in one way or another; thus we speak of the spirit of contradiction, dispute, and so on. But in spirituality especially, we distinguish three spirits: the spirit of God; the purely natural spirit, proceeding from our fallen nature, which also has its impulses, fortitude, lyricism, its momentary enthusiasms, which may create illusion; lastly, the spirit of the devil to whose interest it is to hide himself and disguise himself as an angel of light. For this reason St. John says in his First Epistle: "Dearly beloved, believe not every spirit; but try the spirits if they be of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." e

Generally one of three spirits is dominant in every soul: in the perverse, the devil; in the tepid, the natural spirit; in those who are beginning to give themselves seriously to the interior life, the Spirit of God habitually dominates, but there are many interferences of the natural spirit and of the spirit of evil. Consequently no one should ever be judged by one or two isolated acts, but by his whole life. Even in the perfect, God permits certain imperfections, at times more apparent than real, to keep them in humility and to give them frequent opportunity to practice the contrary virtues. There are persons advanced in the ways of God, who are, as the result of an illness (for example, a progressive infection of the blood), inclined to exceptional irritability. They are like people badly dressed, because their illness increases, as it were tenfold, the painful impression produced by contradictions, and sometimes the latter are incessant. There may be great merit in this struggle, and great patience in seeming impatience.

It is, therefore, most important to discern clearly what spirit moves us, what is God's action in us and what is our own, according to the words of St. John in the prologue of his Gospel: "But as many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in His name, who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." 7 To be "born of God," is our great title of nobility, and we may say of it more than of any other: *Noblesse oblige.*

• Cf. I John 4: i.
TJohn i:uf.

The great principle of the discerning of spirits was given to us by our Lord Himself in the Gospel when He said: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit."[8]

Those, in fact, who are animated by an evil intention cannot long hide it. It does not delay, says St. Thomas,[9] in manifesting itself in different ways: first of all, in things that must be accomplished instantly without time to deliberate and to conceal its intent; then in tribulations, as we read in Ecclesiasticus: "There is a friend for his own occasion, and he will not abide in the day of thy trouble."[10] Likewise, men show their character when they cannot obtain what they wish or when they have already obtained it; thus when a man attains power, he shows what he is.

The tree is known by its fruit: that is, if our fundamental will is good, it yields good fruit. If we hear the word of God that we may put it into practice, people are not long in seeing it; if, on the contrary, we hear it and content ourselves with saying, "Lord, Lord," without doing the will of God, how can we expect good fruit? In the light of this principle, "The tree is judged by its fruit," we can judge what spirit moves us. We must see the results of its influence and compare them with what the Gospel tells us about the principal Christian virtues: humility and mortification or abnegation on the one hand, and, on the other, the three theological virtues of faith, hope, love of God and of souls in God.

The Signs of the Spirit of Nature

In consequence of original sin, nature is the enemy of mortification and humiliations; it seeks self while increasingly disregarding

• Matt. 7:15–18. St. Thomas in his *Commentary on St. Matthew (Joe. cit.)* says that the ravening wolves that present themselves in the clotliing of sheep arc heretics, and next bad prelates.

• *Commentary on St. Matthew,* chap. 7.

10Ecclui. 6:8.

in practice the value of the three theological virtues. In the life of piety as elsewhere, nature pursues pleasure, and it falls into spiritual gluttony, which is the seeking after self and, therefore, the contrary of the spirit of faith and of love of God.

At the first difficulties or aridities, the spirit of nature stands still, quits the interior life. Often, under the pretext of the apostolate, it takes satisfaction in its natural activity, in which the soul becomes increasingly exterior; it confounds charity with philanthropy. Let contradiction, let trial arise, nature complains of the cross, grows irritated, and becomes discouraged. Its first fervor was only a passing enthusiasm; it is indifferent to the glory of God, to His reign, and to the salvation of souls; it is the negation of the zeal or ardor of charity. The spirit of nature is summed up in one word: egoism.

After seeking and failing to find pleasure in the interior life, it declares that one must prudently avoid all exaggeration in austerity, prayer, all mysticism; and from this point of view, a person is already a mystic who daily reads a chapter of *The Imitation* with recollection. It declares that one must follow the common way, by which it means the common way of tepidity or mediocrity, an unstable mean between good and evil, but closer to evil than to good. It seeks rather frequently to make this mediocrity pass for moderation, for the happy mean of virtue. In reality, the happy medium is also a summit above contrary vices, whereas mediocrity seeks to remain halfway between this summit and the depths, the inconveniences of which it would like to avoid without any true love of virtue.

The spirit of nature is depicted by St. Paul as follows: "The sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God. For it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand, because it is spiritually examined." [1] The egoist judges everything from his individual point of view and not from God's. Gradually the spirit of faith, confidence, love of God and souls disappears in him; he relies on himself, weakness itself. At times, however, the gravity of his own ill enlightens him and reminds him of the Savior's words: "Without Me you can do nothing."

[1] Cf. I Cor. 2:14.

The Signs of the Spirit of the Devil

The devil first lifts us up by inspiring us with pride, subsequently to cast us down into trouble, discouragement, and even despair. To recognize his influence, we must consider it in relation to mortification, humility, and the three theological virtues.

The devil does not necessarily, as nature does, disincline us to mortification; on the contrary, he urges certain souls toward an exaggerated, very visible, exterior mortification, especially in centers where it is held in honor. Such a course of action keeps pride alive and ruins health. But the devil does not incline a soul to the interior mortification of the imagination, heart, self-will, and personal judgment, although he sometimes simulates it in us by inspiring us with scruples about trifles and great liberality on dangerous or serious matters. He gives us a great opinion of ourselves, leads us to prefer ourselves to others, to boast of ourselves, unwittingly to pray like the Pharisee.

This spiritual pride is often accompanied by a false humility which makes us speak ill of ourselves on certain points in order to hinder others from speaking ill about us on another point, and in order to give the impression that we are humble. Or indeed it makes us confound humility with timidity, which is rather the fear of rebuffs and scorn.

Instead of nourishing faith by the consideration of the teaching of the Gospel, the spirit of evil draws the attention of certain souls to what is most extraordinary and marvelous, of a nature to make us esteemed, or again to what is foreign to our vocation. He inspires a missionary with the thought of becoming a Carthusian, a Carthusian with that of going to evangelize the infidel. Or, on the contrary, he leads others to minimize the supernatural, to modernize faith by the reading, for example, of liberal, Protestant works.

His way of exciting hope is to give rise to presumption, to lead us to wish to be saints immediately without traversing the indispensable stages and the way of abnegation. He even inspires us with a certain impatience with ourselves and with vexation instead of contrition.

Far from causing our charity to grow, he cultivates self-love in us and, according to temperaments and circumstances, makes charity

deviate either in the direction of a humanitarian sentimentalism of extreme indulgence, or toward liberalism under the guise of generosity, or, on the contrary, toward a bitter zeal, which chides others indiscriminately instead of correcting itself. He shows us the mote in our neighbor's eye, when there is a beam in our οληη.

Instead of giving peace, this spirit engenders dissensions, hatreds. People no longer dare to talk to us; we would not put up with contradiction. An encumbering personalism can thus lead a man to see only himself and unconsciously to place himself on a pedestal.

Should we commit a very evident sin, which we cannot conceal, we fall into confusion, vexation, discouragement; and the devil, who veiled the danger from us before the sin, now exaggerates the difficulties of turning back to God and seeks to lead us to spiritual desolation. He fashions souls to his own image; he rose through pride and he fell in despair.

Great care must therefore be exercised if we have lively sensible devotion and come forth from prayer with increased self-love, preferring ourselves to others, failing in simplicity with our superiors and director. The lack of humility and obedience is a certain indication that it is not God who guides us.

The Signs of the Spirit of God

The signs of the spirit of God are contrary to those of the spirit of nature and of the devil. The spirit of God inclines us to exterior mortification, in which it differs from the spirit of nature, but to an exterior mortification regulated by discretion and obedience, which will not attract attention to us or ruin our health. Moreover, it makes us understand that exterior mortification is of little value if not accompanied by that of the heart, of self-will, and of personal judgment; in this respect, the spirit of God differs from the spirit of the devil.

The spirit of God inspires true humility, which forbids us to prefer ourselves to others, does not fear scorn, is silent about divine favors received, does not deny them if they exist, but refers all their glory to God. It leads us to nourish our faith with what is most simple and profound in the Gospel, while remaining faithful to tra-

dition and fleeing novelties. It shows us our Lord in superiors, and thereby develops our spirit of faith. It quickens hope and preserves us from presumption. It makes us ardently desire the living waters of prayer, reminding us that we must reach them by degrees and by the way of humility, renunciation, and the cross. It gives a holy indifference in regard to human success.

The spirit of God augments the fervor of charity, gives zeal for the glory of God, forgetfulness of self. It leads us to think first of God and to leave the care of our interests to Him. It stirs up the love of our neighbor in us, showing therein the great sign of the love of God. It hinders us from judging rashly, from taking scandal without motive; it inspires meek and patient zeal which edifies by prayer and example instead of irritating by untimely admonitions. The spirit of God gives patience in trial, love of the cross, and love of enemies. It gives peace with ourselves and with others, and even quite often interior joy. Then, if we should happen to fall, it speaks to us of mercy. According to St. Paul, "The fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity," [12] which are united to obedience and humility.

If it is a question of one act in particular, this is a sign that God is visiting our soul when no natural cause has brought the profound consolation with which it suddenly feels itself filled. God alone penetrates thus into the innermost depths of the soul. However, we must distinguish carefully from this first moment of happiness those which follow it, although the soul still feels the grace received, for in the second moment it often happens that of ourselves we form certain thoughts which are no longer inspired by God and into which error may slip.

Rarely does the Holy Ghost make revelations; they are an extraordinary grace that it would be presumptuous to desire, but frequently the interior Guest gives His inspirations to fervent souls to make them taste certain words of the Gospel. Then, under the divine inspiration, the faithful soul should go forward like the artist who follows his genius and who, without thinking of the rules of art, observes them in a superior and spontaneous manner. Then are harmonized humility and zeal, fortitude and meekness, the simplicity

[11] Gal. 5:22 f.

of the dove and the prudence of the serpent. Thus the Holy Spirit leads faithful souls to the harbor of eternity.18

18 We give here only general principles for the discerning of spirits. True, we should not disdain empirical rules and evidences which make possible, as we shall see farther on, the characterization of states. But, as Father R. Régamey, O.P., says in a recent article, "Réflexions sur la théologie spirituelle" *(La Vie spirituelle,* December, 1938, suppi, pp. [151] ff.): "We shall act only very slightly on the life of grace as a physician on physical life by the direct influence of well-determined processes, corresponding to one of the states that we think we have recognized. Our procedures will be little different. Their worth will be in proportion as they cause souls to practice the sole means, which is the effective love of God above all else and of neighbor as oneself. . . . To detail ways of acting which seem particular to each state is often to provoke illusions, if one understands these indications as rules and not as simple counsels which cause one to reflect and which render prudence more docile. In any case, it is stopping at what is accidental" *(ibid.,* p. [101]).

CHAPTER XXIV

The Sacrifice of the Mass and Proficients

WHEN we discussed the purification of the souls of beginners,[1] we spoke of assistance at Mass as a source of sanctification. We shall now treat of the Sacrifice of the Mass in the illuminative way of proficients.

The excellence of the Sacrifice of the Mass, as we said,[2] comes from the fact that the Mass is in substance the same sacrifice as that of the cross, because it is the same principal Priest who continues really to offer Himself through His ministers, the same Victim really present on the altar who is really offered, only the manner of offering being different: on the cross there was a bloody immolation, whereas in the Mass there is a sacramental immolation through the separation, not physical but sacramental, of the body and blood of the Savior by virtue of the double consecration. This sacramental immolation is the memorial of the bloody immolation that is past and the sign of the interior oblation perpetually living in the heart of Christ, who, as St. Paul says, "is always living to make intercession for us." [3] This interior oblation of Jesus, which was like the soul of the sacrifice of the cross, remains the soul of the Sacrifice of the Mass, which perpetuates in substance that of Calvary.

Deeper penetration daily into what constitutes the infinite value of the sacrifice of the altar is essential to progress in the interior life. Speaking to the Lutherans, who suppressed the Eucharistic sacrifice, St. John Fisher declared that: "The Mass is like the sun which daily illumines and warms all Christian life."

The Christian and Catholic doctrine of the Sacrifice of the Mass may be penetrated either in an abstract and speculative manner or in

[1] Cf. Vol. I, chap. 31.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] Heb. *7:15.*

a concrete and experimental manner by uniting oneself personally to the Savior's oblation.

Proficients should live by the four ends of the sacrifice: adoration, reparation, petition, and thanksgiving. Blessed Peter Eymard insisted greatly on this point. That a proficient may live more profoundly by the Mass, he should, in union with our Lord, offer up everything painful in each day and throughout his life, even until his entrance into heaven. It is fitting that he make in advance the sacrifice of his life to obtain the grace of a holy death. Spiritual progress is, in fact, essentially ordered to the last act of love here on earth. If well prepared for by our whole life and very well made, this act will open the gates of heaven to us immediately.

To enter the depths of the Mass, we must place ourselves in the school of the Mother of God. More than anyone else in the world, Mary was associated with the sacrifice of her Son, sharing in all His sufferings in the measure of her love for Him.

Some saints, in particular the stigmatics, for example, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Catherine of Siena, have been exceptionally united to the sufferings and merits of our Savior. But profound as this union was, in comparison with Mary's it was insignificant. By a most intimate experimental knowledge and by the greatness of her love, Mary at the foot of the cross entered the depths of the mystery of the redemption more than did St. John, St. Peter, or St. Paul. She entered it in the measure of the plenitude of grace which she had received; in the measure of her faith, of her love, of the gifts of understanding and wisdom which she had in a degree proportionate to her charity.

That we may enter a little into this mystery and draw from it practical lessons which will enable us to prepare ourselves for a good death, we should think of the sacrifice we ought to make of our lives in union with Mary at the foot of the cross.

The dying are often exhorted to make the sacrifice of their lives in order to give a satisfactory, meritorious, and impetrating value to their last sufferings. The sovereign pontiffs, in particular Pius X, have invited the faithful to offer in advance these sufferings of the last moment, which may perhaps be very great, that they may be well disposed to offer them more generously in their last hour.

But that we may even now make this sacrifice of our lives rightly, we should make it in union with the sacrifice of the Savior sacra-

mentally perpetuated on the altar during Mass, in union with the sacrifice of Mary, Mediatrix and Coredemptrix. And to see clearly all that this oblation implies, it is expedient to recall here the four ends of the sacrifice: adoration, reparation, petition, and thanksgiving. We shall consider them successively and draw from them the lessons that they hold for us.

Adoration

Jesus on the cross made His death a sacrifice of adoration. It was the most perfect accomplishment of the precept of the Decalogue: "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and shalt serve Him only." [4] Jesus used these divine words when He replied to Satan, who, after showing Him all the kingdoms of the world, said to Him: "All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me." [5]

Adoration is due to God alone because of His sovereign excellence as Creator, because He alone is eternally subsistent Being, Wisdom, and Love. The adoration due Him should be both exterior and interior and should be inspired by love; it should be adoration in spirit and in truth.

Adoration of infinite value was offered to God by Christ in Gethsemane when He prostrated Himself, saying: "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." [6] Christ's adoration of the Father recognized in a practical and profound manner the sovereign excellence of God, Master of life and death, of God who, through the love of the Savior, willed to make death, the penalty of sin, serve as reparation for sin and for our salvation. In this eternal decree of God, which contains the entire history of the world, there is a sovereign excellence, recognized by the adoration of Gethsemane.

The Savior's adoration continued on the cross, and Mary associated herself with it in the measure of the plenitude of grace which she had received and which had not ceased to grow. At the moment of the crucifixion of her Son, she adored the rights of God, the Author of life, who for the eternal good of souls was about to make the death of her innocent Son serve as reparation for sin.

[4] Dcur. 6:13.
[5] Matt. 4:9.
[6] Matt. 26:39.

In union with our Lord and His holy Mother, let us adore God and say from our hearts, as Pius X invited us to do: "O Lord, my God, from this moment with a tranquil and submissive heart, I accept from Thy hand the type of death that it shall please Thee to send me, with all its anguish, sufferings, and sorrows." Whoever recites this act of resignation after confession and Communion once in the course of his life, will gain a plenary indulgence that will be applied to him at the hour of death, according to the purity of his conscience. We would do well, however, to repeat this act of oblation daily, and by so doing prepare ourselves to make our death, in union with the sacrifice of Christ continued in substance on the altar, a sacrifice of adoration. And while we are making this act, we should consider the sovereign dominion of God, the majesty and goodness of Him who "leadest down to hell, and bringest up again." [7] "For it is Thou, O Lord, that hast power of life and death, and leadest down to the gates of death, and bringest back again." [8] This adoration of God, Master of life and death, may be made in quite different ways, according as souls are more or less enlightened. Is there a better way than thus to unite oneself daily to the Savior's sacrifice of adoration?

Let us from now on be adorers in spirit and in truth. May our adoration be so sincere and so profound that it will be reflected on our life and dispose us for that which we should have in our hearts at the moment of our death.

Reparation

A second end of the Sacrifice of the Mass is reparation of the offense offered to God by sin and satisfaction for the punishment due to sin. Since adoration should, properly speaking, be reparatory, we ought to make our death a propitiatory sacrifice.

Christ satisfied superabundantly for our sins because, says St. Thomas,® in offering His life for us, He made an act of love which pleased God more than all the sins of the human race displeased Him. His charity was far greater than the malice of His executioners; His charity had an infinite value which it drew from the personality of the Word.

[7] Tob. 13:2; cf. Deut. 32:39.
[8] Wisd. 16:13.
* *Summa,* IIIa, q.48. a. 2.

He satisfied for us, the members of His mystical body. But as the first cause does not render the secondary causes superfluous, the Savior's sacrifice does not render ours useless, but arouses it and gives it its value. Mary set us the example by uniting herself to the sufferings of her Son; she thus satisfied for us to the point of meriting the title of coredemptrix. She accepted the martyrdom of her Son, whom she not only cherished but legitimately adored, and whom she loved most tenderly from the moment she conceived Him virginally.

Even more heroic than the patriarch Abraham ready to immolate his son Isaac, Mary offered her Son for our salvation, and saw Him die in the most atrocious physical and moral sufferings. An angel did not come and put a stop to the sacrifice and say to Mary, as to the patriarch, in the name of the Lord: "Now I know that thou fearest God, and hast not spared thy only-begotten son for My sake." [10] Mary saw the effective and full realization of Jesus' sacrifice of reparation, of which that of Isaac was only a figure. She suffered then from sin in the measure of her love for God whom sin offends, for her Son whom sin crucified, for our souls which sin ravages and puts to death. The charity of the Blessed Virgin incomparably surpassed that of the patriarch, and in her more than in him, were realized the words which he heard: "Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not spared thy only-begotten son for My sake, I will bless thee, and I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven." [11]

Since the sacrifice of Jesus and Mary was a sacrifice of propitiation or reparation for sin, of satisfaction for the punishment due to sin, let us, in union with them, make the sacrifice of our lives a reparation for all our sins. Let us from now on ask that our last moments may have both a meritorious and an expiatory value, and let us also ask for the grace to make this sacrifice with great love, which will increase its twofold value. We should be happy to pay this debt to divine justice that order may be fully re-established in us. If, in this spirit, we unite ourselves intimately to the Masses that are being celebrated every day, if we unite ourselves to the oblation always living in the heart of Christ, an oblation which is the soul of these Masses, then we shall obtain the grace to unite ourselves to them in the same way at the hour of our death. If this union of love with

10 Gen. 22:12.
u Gen. 22:16 f.

Christ Jesus is daily more intimate, the satisfaction of purgatory will be notably shortened for us. We may even receive the grace to complete our purgatory on earth while meriting, while growing in love, instead of after death without meriting.

Petition

The daily sacrifice, like that of the hour of death, should be not only a sacrifice of adoration and reparation, but also a sacrifice of petition in union with Jesus and Mary.

St. Paul writes to the Hebrews: "[Christ] offering up prayers and supplications . . . was heard for His reverence. . . . And being consummated, He became, to all that obey Him, the cause of eternal salvation." [12] Let us call to mind Christ's sacerdotal prayer after the Last Supper and shortly before the sacrifice of the cross: in it Jesus prayed for His apostles and for us. And let us be mindful of the fact that He is "always living to make intercession for us," [13] in particular in the Sacrifice of the Mass, of which He is the principal Priest.

Jesus, who prayed for His executioners, prays for the dying who recommend themselves to Him. With Him the Blessed Virgin Mary intercedes, remembering that we have often said to her: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death."

The dying man should unite himself to the Masses being celebrated far and near; he should ask through them, through the great prayer of Christ which continues in them, for the grace of a good death or final perseverance, the grace of graces, that of the elect. He should ask this grace not only for himself, but for all those who are dying at the same time.

To dispose ourselves even now to make this act of petition in our last hour, we should often pray at Mass for those who will die in the course of the day. Following the recommendation of Pope Benedict XV, we should occasionally have a Mass offered to obtain through this infinitely valuable sacrifice of petition the grace of a good death, or the application of our Savior's merits. We should also have Masses offered for those of our relatives and friends about

[12] Heb. 5:7, 9.
[13] Heb. 7:25.

whose salvation we have reason to be concerned, in order to obtain for them the final grace, and also for those whom we may have scandalized and perhaps led astray from the way of God.

Thanksgiving

Lastly, everyone should daily prepare himself to make his death, in union with our Lord and Mary, a sacrifice of thanksgiving for all the benefits received since baptism, keeping in mind the many absolutions and Communions that have reinstated or kept him in the way of salvation.

Christ made His death a sacrifice of thanksgiving when He said: "It is consummated";[14] Mary uttered this *"Constmrmatum est"* with Him. This form of prayer, which continues in the Mass, will not cease even when the last Mass has been said at the end of the world. When there will no longer be any sacrifice properly so called, there will be its consummation, and in it there will always be the adoration and thanksgiving of the elect who, united to our Savior and to Mary, will sing the *Sanctus* with the angels and glorify God while thanking Him.

This thanksgiving is admirably expressed by the words of the ritual which the priest says at the bedside of the dying after giving them a last absolution and Holy Viaticum. "Go forth from this world, Christian soul, in the name of God the Father almighty, who created thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, who suffered for thee, in the name of the glorious and holy Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the name of Blessed Joseph, her predestined spouse, in the name of the angels and archangels, in the name of the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, in the name of all the saints of God. May thy dwelling today be in peace and thy rest in the heavenly Jerusalem, through Jesus Christ, our Lord."

To conclude, we should often repeat, in order to give it its full value, the act recommended by Pope Pius X, and we should ask Mary for the grace to make our death a sacrifice of adoration, reparation, petition, and thanksgiving. When we assist the dying, we should exhort them to make this sacrifice while uniting themselves to the Masses then being celebrated. We ourselves should even now make it in advance and often renew it each day as if it were to be our

[14] John 19:30.

last. By so doing we prepare ourselves to make it very well at the last moment. Then we shall understand that if God leads the soul down to the gates of death, He brings it back again.[16] Our death will be as if transfigured; we shall call on the Savior and His holy Mother that they may come and get us and grant us the last of graces which will definitively assure our salvation, by a last act of faith, trust, and love.[18]

What we have just said of the sacrifice of our lives in union with the Sacrifice of the Mass, should be understood by an interior soul in a realistic and practical manner that will make him live the words of St. Paul: "I die daily." [17] It is a question here of accepting in advance with patience and love not only the sufferings of the last moments of life, but all the physical and moral sufferings which God has prepared from all eternity to purify us and make us work for the salvation of souls. These sufferings are of all sorts: want of consideration, contradictions, defamation. They are insignificant in comparison with those which Jesus bore for love of us; nevertheless, because of our weakness, they seem very heavy to us at times. Let us accept them at Mass, before Holy Communion, at the moment of the breaking of the host, which symbolizes the breaking of all the bruises that Jesus bore for us.

May this breaking make us think of what should be in us: fervent contrition. Then, more conscious of our sins and of the necessity of making reparation for them, we shall more willingly accept in advance the physical and moral sufferings which Providence reserves for us. We shall accept them, asking for a serious beginning of the love of the cross or the love of Jesus crucified. Should we not return Him love for love?

We should reread what Christ says to His faithful servant according to *The Imitation:* "Son, let not the labors which thou hast undertaken for My sake crush thee, neither let tribulations, from whatever source, cast thee down; but in every occurrence let My promise strengthen and console thee. I am sufficient to recompense

15 Wisd. 16:13.

18 To live profoundly by the Mass, we recommend the book of Father C. Grimaud, *Ma Messe* (Téqui, 17th ed.), which shows how we should unite ourselves practically to our Lord's sacrifice perpetuated on the altar by recalling the four ends of the sacrifice. The author also sets forth at length the fruits of the Mass as well for the living as for the dead.

17 Cf. I Cor. 15:31.

thee beyond all bounds and measure. . . . Mind what thou art about: labor faithfully in My vineyard: I will be thy reward; write, read, sing, lament, keep silence, pray, bear adversities manfully: eternal life is worth all these, and greater combats. Peace shall come one day, which is known to the Lord. . . . Oh! if thou couldst see the everlasting crowns of the saints in heaven, and in how great glory they now triumph, who appeared contemptible heretofore to this world, and as it were even unworthy of life, doubtless thou wouldst immediately cast thyself down to the very earth, and wouldst rather be ambitious to be in subjection to all, than to have precedence over so much as one. Neither wouldst thou covet the pleasant days of this life, but wouldst rather be glad to suffer tribulation for God's sake, and esteem it the greatest gain to be reputed as nothing amongst men." [18]

In assisting at the Sacrifice of the Mass or in celebrating it, we should unite our personal oblation to our Savior's, offering Him the contradictions and tribulations which await us in life, mindful that they may thus become most fruitful for us. Obstacles may in this way be transformed into means. The cross was the greatest obstacle that men raised against Jesus; He made it the greatest instrument of salvation. If each member in the mystical body performs his duty supernaturally, all the others benefit, just as, when each little cell in our body functions as it should, the entire organism profits. For this reason, however little we may be able to do, its worth is great if it is accomplished in the spirit of the love of God and of neighbor, in union with Jesus the eternal Priest. In the greatest calamities little children are asked to pray; their earnest, humble prayer, united to that of the Savior, cannot fail to be heard by God.

We may better comprehend what the Mass should be for proficients by reflecting that its different parts correspond to the love which purifies (Confiteor, Introit, Kyrie, Gloria), to the love which enlightens and offers itself (Collect, Epistle, Gospel, Credo, Offertory), and to the love which sacrifices itself and unites itself to God (Consecration, Communion, Thanksgiving). Such consideration reminds us of the purgative way of beginners, the illuminative way of proficients, and the unitive way of the perfect. These are the normal phases of the ascent of the soul toward God.

[18] *The Imitation,* Bk. III, chap. 47.

CHAPTER XXV

The Communion of Proficients

EARLIER in this work [1] we discussed the Communion of those who begin to give themselves seriously to the interior life. We explained how Holy Communion sustains, restores, and increases spiritual life, and why it demands as a condition an upright and pious intention. A fervent Communion, we said, presupposes hunger for the Eucharist or the keen desire to receive it in order to be more closely united to our Lord and to grow in love of God and neighbor. Each of our Communions, we pointed out, should be substantially more fervent than the preceding one, with a fervor of will if not of feeling; each should, in fact, increase charity in us and consequently prepare us to receive our Lord better and more fruitfully the following day. This is the case in the lives of the saints, whose ascent toward God is increasingly rapid; the nearer they approach Him, the more they are drawn by Him, as the stone falls more rapidly as it approaches the earth which attracts it.[2] This acceleration in the journey toward God should, therefore, be realized in the Communion of proficients far more than in that of beginners. For the child, his first Communion is certainly a great grace, but the following Communions should always be more fruitful.

That we may see what the Communion of proficients should be, we should remember that the principal effect of Holy Communion is the increase of charity. Proficients should grow in this virtue particularly, remembering that fraternal charity is one of the great signs

1 Cf. Vol. I, chap. 32.

2 Cf. St. Thomas, *In Epist. ad Hebraeos,* 10:25: "The natural motion (i.e., of a falling stone) grows the more (in proportion) as it more nearly approaches its end. The contrary is true of violent motion (e.g., of a stone cast into the air). Grace likewise follows the motion of nature. Therefore those who are in the state of grace ought to grow more in proportion as they draw nearer to their end."

of the progress of the love of God.[3] This will be more readily understood by reflecting that Communion, through union with our Lord, assures the unity and growth of His mystical body.[4]

The Holy Table and the Unity of the Mystical Body

St. Paul writes: "The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord? For we, being many, are one bread, one body: all that partake of one bread." [5] At this common table of the faithful, every dissension should disappear.

As St. John Chrysostom [6] and St. Augustine [7] explain, the Communion of the faithful united at the Holy Table to nourish their souls with the body of our Lord and to be increasingly incorporated in Him, is the sign of the unity of the Church and the bond of charity. All the faithful who communicate show, in fact, that they have the same faith in the Eucharist, which supposes all the other mysteries of Christianity; they show that they have the same hope of heaven and the same love of God and of souls in God, the same worship. This it is which makes St. Augustine say: "O sacrament of true piety, sign of unity, bond of charity! . . . The Lord has given us His body and blood under the species of bread and wine, and as the bread is made out of many grains of wheat and the wine from many grapes, so the Church of Christ is made out of the multitude of the faithful united by charity." [8]

Moreover, Pope Piux X, when inviting the faithful to frequent and daily Communion, recalled this great principle: "The Holy Table is the symbol, the root, and the principle of Catholic unity." In the light of this principle, we should, before receiving Communion, think of the obstacles that we ourselves may oppose to the supernatural union of charity with Christ Jesus and His members,

[3] John 13:35.
[4] This subject was treated at the International Eucharistic Congress which took place in Manila in 1937.
[5] Cf. I Cor. 10:16 f.
[6] *PG,* LXI, 200.
[7] PL, XXXV, 1612.
[8] *In Joannem,* tract. 26. *Sirnmia,* Illa, q.79, a. 1.

and should ask Him for light to see these obstacles more clearly and generosity to remove them. If we are negligent in doing so ourselves, we should ask the Lord Himself to remove them, even though we suffer greatly thereby. The Christian who communicates with these profoundly sincere dispositions certainly receives a notable increase of charity, which unites him more closely to our Lord and to souls in Him.

In this sense the author of *The Imitation* invites us to say as a preparation for Holy Communion: "I offer to Thee all my good works, though very few and imperfect, that Thou mayest amend and sanctify them; that Thou mayest have a pleasurable regard to them, and make them acceptable to Thee and always make them tend to better. . . . I offer to Thee also all the pious desires of devout persons; the necessities of my parents, friends, brothers, sisters, and all those that are dear to me . . . and who have desired and besought me to offer up prayers and Masses for themselves and all theirs. . . . I offer up also to Thee prayers and this sacrifice of propitiation for them in particular who have in any way injured me, grieved me, or abused me, or have inflicted upon me any hurt or injury. And for all those likewise whom I have at any time grieved, troubled, oppressed, or scandalized by words or deeds, knowingly or unknowingly; that it may please Thee to forgive us all our sins and mutual offenses. Take, O Lord, from our hearts all suspicion, indignation, anger, and contention, and whatever else may wound charity and lessen brotherly love."[9]

Communion received with these dispositions effectively assures in a concrete and experiential manner the unity of the mystical body, union with our Savior and with all souls vivified by Him. It is thus a powerful help in the midst of so many causes of dissensions among individuals, classes, and peoples. It should contribute greatly to assure the reign of Christ through the peace of Christ, above all the inconsistent dreams of those who seek a principle of union, not in God but in the passions that divide men.

Communion and the Growth of the Mystical Body of Christ

Holy Communion should contribute to assure not only the unity, but the growth of the mystical body of our Savior. St. Paul wrote

[9] Bk. IV, chap. 9.

to the Ephesians that we are all called by God to attain "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ; that henceforth we be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine. . . . But doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in Him who is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, being compacted and fitly joined together, . . . maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in charity." [10] This influence of the Savior on His members is exercised particularly by Eucharistic Communion. Christians who are nourished by the bread of life reach the perfection which God destines for them.

St. Thomas even says: "Baptism is the beginning of the spiritual life, and the door of the sacraments; whereas the Eucharist is, as it were, the consummation of the spiritual life, and the end of all the sacraments, . . . for by the hallowings of all the sacraments preparation is made for receiving or consecrating the Eucharist. . . . Therefore, from the fact of children being baptized, they are destined by the Church to the Eucharist," [11] somewhat as, in the natural order, childhood is ordered to the full development of adult age. In this sense, at least the implicit desire of the effect of the Eucharist is necessary for salvation.[12] Therefore it is impossible to reach the perfection of Christian life without preparing oneself to receive each Communion with increased fervor of will and greater fruit.

In addition, not only each Christian, but each parish, each diocese, the entire Church in each generation, reaches maturity, the fruitfulness of "the perfect age," that it may propagate the faith which it has received and transmit it to the following generation like a sacred seed. Each epoch has its difficulties, and, with the return of the masses to unbelief, the difficulties of our day might before long resemble those which the early Church encountered during the centuries of persecution. The Christian should find his strength in the Eucharist today as in the days of the catacombs. He should hunger for the Eucharist, that is, have an ardent desire to be united to Christ by a profound union of the will, which, by the persevering practice of the virtues, will resist all temptations and enable him to cope with the difficult circumstances in which he lives.

[10] Eph. 4:13-16.
[11] *Sttnnna,* Illa, q. 73, a. 3.
[12] *Ibid.*

With the author of *The Imitation* we should say: "Lord God, when shall I be wholly united to Thee and absorbed in Thee, and altogether unmindful of myself? Thou in me, and I in Thee; and thus grant us both equally to continue in one. Verily, Thou art my Beloved, the choicest among thousands,[13] in whom my soul is well pleased to dwell all the days of this life. Verily, Thou art my Peacemaker, in whom is sovereign peace and true rest; and out of whom is labor and sorrow and infinite misery. Thou art in truth a hidden God,[14] and Thy counsel is not with the wicked, but Thy conversation is with the humble and the simple. Oh, how sweet, O Lord, is Thy spirit,[18] who, to show Thy sweetness toward Thy children, vouchsafest to refresh them with that most delicious bread which cometh down from heaven!" [18]

The Psalmist had already exclaimed: "O how great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee!" [17] Since the institution of the Eucharist, how well these words are verified by a fervent Communion! We read in *The Imitation:* "For they truly know their Lord in the breaking of bread, whose heart burneth so mightily within them, from Jesus walking with them. Alas, far from me too often is such affection and devotion, such vehement love and ardor. Be Thou merciful to me, O good Jesus, sweet and gracious, and grant Thy poor mendicant to feel, sometimes at least, in Holy Communion some little of the cordial affection of Thy love, that my faith may be more strengthened, my hope in Thy goodness increased; and that my charity, once perfectly enkindled, and having tasted the manna of heaven, may never die away. Powerful, indeed, is Thy mercy to grant me the grace I desire, and in Thy great clemency, when the time of Thy good pleasure arrives, to visit me with the spirit of fervor." [18]

Plunger for the Eucharist is thus expressed by the same author: "With great devotion and ardent love, with all affection and fervor of heart, I desire to receive Thee, O Lord, as many saints and devout persons, who were most pleasing to Thee in holiness of life and in the most burning devotion, have desired Thee when they

[13] Cant. 5:10.
[14] Isa. 45:15.
[18] Wisd. 12:1.
[19] *The Imitation,* Bk. IV, chap. 13.
[17] Ps. 30:20.
[18] Bk. IV, chap. 14.

communicated. . . . I desire to reserve nothing for myself, but freely and most willingly to immolate to Thee myself and all that is mine. . . . I desire to receive Thee . . . with such faith, hope, and purity, as Thy most holy Mother, the glorious Virgin Mary, received and desired Thee, when the angel announced to her the mystery of the Incarnation. . . . I here offer and present to Thee the joys of all devout hearts, their ardent affections, their ecstasies, supernatural illuminations, and heavenly visions, together with all the virtues and praises that are or shall be celebrated by all creatures in heaven and earth; . . . thus by all Thou mayest be worthily praised and glorified forever." [19]

The Christian who receives Communion with these dispositions makes increasingly rapid progress toward God and certainly brings other souls with him. Thus is assured the growth of the mystical body of Christ. But we must go a step farther in generosity.

Communion and the Gift of Oneself

Our Lord commands us: "Love one another, as I have loved you."[20] He loved us even to dying for us on the cross and giving Himself to us as food in the Eucharist. The Christian should, therefore, in Communion learn the gift of self in order to imitate our Lord. The Eucharistic heart of Jesus, which instituted the Eucharist for us and daily gives it to us, is the eminent exemplar of the perfect gift of self. It reminds us that it is more perfect to give than to receive, to love than to be loved.

Therefore, imitating the example of our Savior, we should, after receiving, give ourselves to others to bring them the light of life and peace. A soul that is increasingly incorporated in our Lord by Holy Communion should in its turn serve somewhat as the bread of the souls which surround it, following the example of our Lord who wished to be our bread. To the less enlightened, to the weak, even to those who wander far from the altar, it should give itself without counting the cost, in spite of misunderstandings, coldnesses, and evil actions. By so doing it will certainly cause souls that have strayed to return to the Eucharistic heart of Jesus, that "forgotten, despised, outraged heart, slighted by men." It is, nevertheless, the heart which

[19] *Ibid.,* chap. 17.
[20] John 13:34.

loves us, which is "patient in waiting for us, eager to grant our prayers, desirous that we pray to it, the burning source of new graces, the silent heart wishing to speak to souls, the refuge of the hidden life, master of the secrets of divine union," [21] the heart of Him who seems to sleep, but who watches always and overflows incessantly with charity.

This heart is the eminent model of the perfect gift of oneself. For this reason a friend of the Curé of Ars, Father Chevrier, a holy priest of Lyons, of whom we spoke earlier in this work, used to say to his spiritual sons: "Following the example of our Lord, the priest should die to his body, spirit, will, reputation, family, the world; he should immolate himself by silence, prayer, work, penance, suffering, and death. The more a man is dead to himself, the more life he has and the more he gives it. The priest is a crucified man. He ought also through charity, in imitation of his Master, to give his body, spirit, time, goods, health, and life; he should give life by his faith, teaching, words, prayers, powers, and example. He must become good bread; the priest is a man who is consumed." [22]

What is said here of the priest, should be said in a certain sense of every perfect Christian, who ought continually to devote himself in a supernatural manner in order to bring those about him to the end of man's journey, which he too often forgets. Zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls is the answer which all should give to our Savior's precept: "Love one another, as I have loved you." [23] In fervent Communion we shall find that generosity which causes the gift of God that we have received to radiate on other souls, and which thus shows the value and the fruits of the Eucharist. We have only to receive the love of God and to give it back to Him in the person of our neighbor.

21 Words taken from the prayer to the Eucharistic heart of Jesus.

22 Antoine Lestra, *Le Père Chevrier,* Paris, 1024, n. i6ç: "Le tableau de Saint-Fons."

22 John 13:34.

CHAPTER XXVI

Devotion to Mary in Proficients

IN chapter six of the first part of this work, we spoke of the influence of Mary Mediatrix, explaining how she cooperated in the sacrifice of the cross through merit and satisfaction, how she does not cease to intercede for us, to obtain for us and distribute to us all the graces that we receive. We shall apply these principles here, as St. Grignion de Montfort does,[1] to show what devotion to Mary should be in proficients. We shall see what constitutes true devotion to the Blessed Virgin, its degrees, and its fruits.

True Devotion to Mary

We are not speaking here of an entirely exterior, presumptuous, inconstant, hypocritical, and interested devotion, but of true devotion which St. Thomas defines as "promptness of the will in the service of God."[2] This promptness of the will, which should subsist despite aridity of the sensible part of the soul, inclines us to render to our Lord and His holy Mother the worship that is due them.[3] As Jesus is our Mediator with His Father, in the same way we should go to our Savior through Mary. The mediation of the Son throws light on that of His holy Mother.

They are deluded who claim to reach union with God without having continual recourse to our Lord. They will hardly attain to an abstract knowledge of God, and not to that sweet knowledge called wisdom; a lofty knowledge at once practical, living, and experiential, which makes us discover the ways of Providence in the

[1] *Treatise on the True Devotion to Mary. The Secret of Mary.*

[2] *Summa,* IIa IIae, q.8z, a. i: "Devotion is apparently nothing else but the will to give oneself readily to things concerning the service of God."

• A distinction must be made, however, between the worship of latria due to God and the humanity of the Savior personally united to the Word, and the worship of hyperdulia, due to the Blessed Virgin.

most insignificant things. The quietists were mistaken in holding that Christ's sacred humanity was a means useful only at the beginning of the spiritual life; they did not sufficiently recognize the universal mediation of our Savior.

Another error consists in wishing to go to our Lord without passing through Mary. This was one of the errors of the Protestants. And even some Catholics do not see clearly enough how expedient it is to have recourse to the Blessed Virgin in order to enter the intimacy of Christ. As St. Grignion de Montfort says, they know Mary "only in a speculative, dry, fruitless, indifferent manner. . . . They fear that devotion toward her is abused and that injury is done to our Lord by paying excessive honor to His holy Mother. . . . If they speak of devotion to Mary, it is less to recommend it than to destroy the abuses of it." [4] They seem to consider Mary "a hindrance in reaching divine union," [5] whereas all her influence is exercised in order to lead us to it. It would be just as sensible to say that the holy Curé of Ars was a hindrance to his parishioners in their progress toward God.

To neglect the Mediators whom God has given us because of our weakness, shows a lack of humility. Intimacy with our Lord in prayer will be greatly facilitated by frequent recourse to Mary.

The Degrees of This Devotion

Devotion to Mary, which should exist in every Christian, ought to grow with charity. The first degree consists in praying to the Blessed Virgin from time to time, honoring her as the Mother of God, saying, for example, the Angelus with true recollection every time it rings. The second degree consists in having more perfect sentiments of veneration, confidence, and love for Mary. They lead us to the daily recitation of at least one of the three parts of the Rosary while we meditate on the joyful, sorrowful, or glorious mysteries, which are for us the road of eternal life.

The third degree of the true devotion to Mary, that proper to proficients, consists in consecrating oneself entirely to our Lord through her. In a clear explanation of this consecration, St. Grignion de Montfort says: "This devotion consists in giving oneself en-

[4] *Treatise on the True Devotion to Mary,* chap. 2, a. i.
[5] *Ibid.,* chap. 4, a. 6.

tirely to the Blessed Virgin in order to belong entirely to Jesus Christ through her. We must give her: (1) our body with all its senses and members (that she may keep them in perfect purity); (2) our soul with all its powers; (3) our exterior goods, present and to come; (4) our interior and spiritual goods, our merits, virtues, and good works, past, present, and future." [6]

To have a clear understanding of this oblation, we must distinguish in our good works between what is incommunicable to others and what is communicable to other souls. What is incommunicable in our good works is merit, properly so called *{de condigno},* which constitutes a right in justice to an increase of charity and to eternal life. These personal merits are incommunicable; in this respect they differ from those of Jesus Christ who, being constituted the head of humanity and our pledge, could merit for us in strict justice.

Consequently, if we offer our merits, properly so called, to the Blessed Virgin, it is not that she may give them to other souls, but that she may preserve them, make them fructify, and, if we should have the misfortune to lose them through mortal sin, that she may obtain for us the grace of so fervent a contrition that it may enable us to recover not only the state of grace, but the degree of grace lost; so that if we have lost five talents, we may recover these five, and not merely two or three.[7]

What is communicable to others in our good works is congruous merit; it is also their satisfactory or reparatory value and their value as impétration or prayer.

By congruous merit, based not on justice, but on the charity or friendship which unites us to God *{in jure amicabili),* we can obtain graces for our neighbor. Thus a good Christian mother draws graces on her children by her virtuous life because God takes into consideration the intentions and good works of this generous mother. Likewise, we can also pray for our neighbor, for his conversion, his progress, for hardened sinners, the agonizing, the souls in purgatory.

Lastly, we can satisfy for others, we can voluntarily accept the punishment due to their sins, expiate them, as Mary did for us at the foot of the cross, and thus draw the divine mercy down upon them. We can also gain indulgences for the souls in purgatory, open

[6] *Ibid.,* chap. 3, a. 1.
[7] Cf. *Sunmia,* Illa, q.89, a. 2.

to them the treasure of the merits of Christ and the saints, and hasten their dehverance.

If we offer all our vexations and sufferings to Mary in this way, she will send us crosses proportionate to our strength aided by grace to make us labor for the salvation of souls.

Who should be advised to make this consecration as we have explained it? It should not be advised for those who would make it through sentimentality or spiritual pride without comprehending its meaning; but it is fitting to counsel it for truly pious and fervent souls, at first for a time, from one feast of the Blessed Virgin to another, then for a year. Thus one will become penetrated by this spirit of abandonment and later can make this act with fruit for one's whole life.

It has been objected that such an act strips us and does not pay our own debt, which will increase our purgatory. This is the objection made by the devil to St. Bridget when she was preparing to make a similar act. Our Lord made the saint understand that this is the objection of self-love, which forgets the goodness of Mary, who does not let herself be outdone in generosity. By thus stripping oneself, one receives the hundredfold. And indeed the love to which this generous act testifies obtains for us even now the remission of part of our purgatory.

Others object, asking how, after having once and for all given all our prayers to Mary, we can pray especially for our parents and friends. The answer to this question is that the Blessed Virgin knows our duties of charity toward our parents and friends, and, should we forget to pray for them as we ought, she would remind us to do so. Moreover, among our parents and friends there are some who have a particular need of prayers, of which we are often ignorant; but Mary knows their needs and will thus, without our being aware of it, make these souls benefit by our prayers. We can always ask her to favor others.

The Fruits of This Devotion

St. Grignion de Montfort says[8] that this road to God is easier, and nevertheless more meritorious, and consequently a more perfect, short, and sure road.

[8] *Ibid.,* chap. 4, a. 4 f.

First of all, it is an easier way. "One can in truth," he says, "reach divine union by other roads; but it will be by many more crosses and strange deaths, with many more difficulties, which he shall conquer with greater difficulty. He shall have to pass through dark nights, combats, and strange agonies, steep mountains, very sharp thorns, and frightful deserts. But by way of Mary, the passage is more sweet and tranquil. On this road, in truth, are great combats to be fought and great difficulties to be overcome; but this good Mother takes up her position so near her faithful servants to enlighten them in their darkness, to illumine them in their doubts, to sustain them in their struggles and difficulties that in reality this virginal road to find Jesus Christ is a road of roses and honey compared with other roads." Evidence of this fact appears in the lives of saints who more particularly followed this way, such as St. Ephrem, St. John Damascene, St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure, St. Bernardine of Siena, St. Francis de Sales.

The vision of St. Francis of Assisi in this connection is well known. One day the saint saw his sons trying to reach our Lord by a ladder that was red and very steep; after climbing a few rungs, they would fall back. Our Lord then showed St. Francis another ladder, white and much less steep, at whose summit appeared the Blessed Virgin, and He said to Francis: "Advise your sons to go by the ladder of My Mother."

By way of Mary the road is easier because the Blessed Virgin supports us by her gentleness; nevertheless it is a more meritorious road because Mary obtains for us a greater charity, which is the principle of merit. The difficulties to be overcome are certainly an occasion of merit, but the principle of merit is charity, the love of God, by which we triumph over these difficulties. We should remember that Mary merited more by her easiest acts, such as a simple prayer, than did the martyrs in their torments, for she put more love of God into these easy acts than the saints did in heroic acts.

Since the road by way of Mary is easier and more meritorious, it is shorter, surer, and more perfect; more easily traveled, progress on it is more rapid. By submission to the Mother of God, a person makes greater progress in a short time than he would make in many years relying excessively on his own personal prudence. Under the direction of her whom the Incarnate Word obeyed, he walks with giant steps.

This road is also more perfect, since through Mary the Word of God came down perfectly to us without losing anything of His divinity; through her, very little souls can ascend even to the Most High without fearing anything. She purifies our good works and increases their value when she presents them to her Son.

Lastly, it is a surer road, on which we are better preserved from the illusions of the devil who seeks to deceive us, imperceptibly at first, that later he may lead us into great sin. On this road we are also preserved from the illusions of day-dreaming and sentimentality. In the subordination of the causes that transmit divine grace, Mary exercises, in fact, a salutary influence on our sensibility; she calms it, rules it, to enable the elevated part of our soul to receive the influence of our Lord more fruitfully. In addition, Mary herself is to our sensible faculties a most pure and holy object, which lifts our soul toward union with God. She gives us great interior liberty, and, on our urgent petition, she sometimes obtains our immediate deliverance from the deviations of our sensible appetites which hinder prayer and intimate union with our Lord. The purpose of the entire influence of Mary Mediatrix is to lead us to the intimacy of Jesus, as He Himself leads us to the Father.

It is advisable to ask for Mary's particular assistance at the moment of Holy Communion that she may make us share in her profound piety and love, as if she were to lend us her most pure heart to receive our Lord worthily. We may with profit make our thanksgiving in the same way.

We shall conclude by giving the essential parts of the consecration of oneself to Jesus Christ through Mary's hands:

O Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom! O most amiable and adorable Jesus, true God and true Man, I thank Thee for having annihilated Thyself, taking the form of a slave, to draw me from the slavery of the devil. . . . I have recourse to the intercession of Thy most holy Mother, whom Thou hast given me as a Mediatrix. By this means I hope to obtain from Thee contrition and the pardon of my sins, the acquisition and preservation of wisdom.

Hail, Immaculate Mary, Queen of heaven and earth, to whom everything under God is subject. Hail, safe Refuge of sinners, whose mercy fails no one; hear and grant my desires for divine wisdom, and to that end receive the vows and offerings that my baseness presents to thee.

I, an unfaithful sinner, today renew and ratify in thy hands my bap-

tismal vows. I forever renounce Satan, his works and pomps, and I give myself completely to Jesus Christ, Incarnate Wisdom, to carry my cross after Him all the days of my life. And that I may be more faithful to Him than I have been hitherto, I choose thee, O Mary, for my mother. I give and consecrate to thee my body and soul, my interior and exterior goods, and the very value of my good works past, present, and future. Present me to thy Son and grant me the grace to obtain true wisdom from God, and for that purpose to place myself in the number of those whom thou dost love, teach, lead, feed, and protect. O faithful Virgin, render me in all things so perfect a disciple and imitator of Incarnate Wisdom, Jesus Christ, thy Son, that by thy intercession and example, I may attain to the plenitude of His age on earth and His glory in heaven. Amen.·

• This is the essential part of the consecration at the close of St. Grignion de Montfort's *Treatise on the True Devotion to Mary.* Mention is made there, in contrast to the slavery of sin, of a holy slavery of love which some have not always clearly understood. It in no way diminishes the wholly filial affection which we should have for Mary, but in the formula itself some souls prefer to place the emphasis on this filial character of our relations with the Mother of God.

CHAPTER XXVII

The Universal Accessibility of the Mysticism of *The Imitation*

AT this point in our study, we shall examine in the light of *The Imitation of Jesus Christ* the question proposed at the beginning of this work: namely, whether the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith and the union with God resulting from it are in the normal way of sanctity, and also what are the dispositions ordinarily required to obtain such a grace.

The Imitation is not a didactic treatise; it is the experimental story of a soul in love with perfection, a story written from day to day, following prayer that is now laborious, now full of light and heavenly inebriation. It is certainly not only an ascetical book but also a mystical book; it leads to the practice of the virtues, but in view of contemplation and union with God. It is manifestly addressed to all interior souls, and in reality all read it. This is equivalent to saying that the true mysticism of which it speaks is accessible to all, if they are willing to follow the way of humility, the cross, continual prayer, and docility to the Holy Ghost. This fact is one of the strongest reasons in favor of the affirmative answer to the question proposed.

As Father Dumas, S.M., writes in his beautiful study on *The Imitation: "The Imitation* has a beauty, a virtue which touches, moves, and captivates infirm, indifferent, even unbelieving hearts. Yet it is not addressed primarily to sinners or to beginners; it assumes that some progress in virtue has already been made. It eagerly seeks nothing less than to raise us to contemplation and the intimate consolations of the life of union.

"Contemplation, intimate union with God, is the end, the destiny, and consequently the imperious need of our soul, which can

find rest and peace only in God. And it is because *The Imitation* gives a glimpse of this peace and rest, while directing the soul toward union with the supreme Good, that every soul, even though very imperfect, experiences on reading this book—which in reality it only half understands—a comforting sweetness impossible to explain." [1]

Our purpose is to show the essentially mystical character of *The Imitation,* to see whether, according to it, the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith and the union with God resulting from it are highly desirable for all, and then to point out what ascetical dispositions, according to *The Imitation,* are ordinarily required to receive such a grace.

The Mystical Character of the Imitation

Is it true that *The Imitation* is an essentially mystical and not only an ascetical book?

By the mystical knowledge of God we understand that knowledge obtained, not by rational speculations or only by faith, but by a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost in prayer. It is a quasi-experimental knowledge of God, according to St. Thomas,[2] which proceeds from faith vivified by love and enlightened by the gifts of understanding and of wisdom. St. John of the Cross teaches the same doctrine: "Infused contemplation is a certain inflowing of God into the soul whereby God secretly teaches the soul and instructs it in the perfection of love, without efforts on its own part beyond a loving attention to God, listening to His voice and admitting the light He sends, but without understanding how this is infused contemplation." [3] St. Francis de Sales speaks in similar terms.[4]

The Imitation continually exhorts the interior soul to humility, abnegation, and docility, which will prepare it to receive the grace of contemplation and of union with God. We see this on every page, and more especially in Book I, chapter 3, and in Book II, chapters 31 and 43.

[1] *Introduction à l'union intime avec Dieu, d'après l'imitation* (4th ed.; Paris: Téqui, 1916), p. 9.

[2] Cf. *I Sent.,* dist. 14, q. 2, a. 2 ad 3 um; *Comm. in Ep. Rom.,* 8:16. Cf. Ha Ilae, q.180, a.i, 2, 4, 7; q.4j, a.2; q.8, a.6, 7, 8.

[3] *The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chap. 5.

[4] *The Love of God,* Bk. VI, chaps. 3, 5, 7, 10.

In Book I, chapter 3, we read:

Happy is he whom truth teacheth by itself, not by figures and passing sounds, but as it is in itself. . . . Wonderful folly! that, neglecting the things that are useful and necessary, we give our attention unbidden to such as are curious and mischievous. . . . He to whom the eternal Word speaketh is delivered from a multitude of opinions. From the One Word are all things, and all things speak this One; and this is the Beginning which also speaketh to us. Without Him no man understandeth, or rightly judgeth.

I am oftentimes wearied with the many things I read and hear; in Thee is all I wish or long for. Let all teachers hold their peace, and all created things keep silence in Thy presence; do Thou alone speak to me. The more a man is recollected within himself and interiorly simple, so much the more and deeper things doth he understand without labor; for he receiveth the light of understanding from on high. . . . The humble knowledge of oneself is a surer way to God than deep researches after science. Knowledge is not to be blamed nor simple acquaintance with things, good in itself and ordained by God; but a good conscience and a virtuous life are always to be preferred. . . . He is truly prudent who esteemeth all earthly things as naught, that he may win Christ. And he is truly most learned, who doth the will of God, and forsaketh his own will.

This is the knowledge, the understanding, and the wisdom, which come from the Holy Ghost, and which, without His divine inspirations, cannot be preserved.

The author of *The Imitation* also says:

Lord, I stand much in need of a grace yet greater, if I must arrive so far that it may not be in the power of any man or anything created to hinder me. . . . "Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest?" * . . . And what can be more free than he who desires nothing upon earth? A man ought, therefore, to soar over above everything created, and perfectly to forsake himself, and in ecstasy of mind to stand and see that Thou, the Creator of all, hast nothing like to Thee among creatures. . . . And this is the reason why there are found so few contemplative persons, because there are few that know how to sequester themselves entirely from perishable creatures. For this a great grace is required, such as may elevate the soul, and lift it up above itself. And unless a man be elevated in spirit, and freed from attachment to all creatures, and wholly united to God, whatever he knows and whatever he has, is of no great importance. . . . There is a great difference between the wis-

•Ps. 34:7.

dom of an illuminated and devout man, and the knowledge of a learned and studious cleric. Far more noble is that learning which flows from above from the divine influence [this is clearly infused contemplation], than that which is laboriously acquired by the industry of man. Many are found to desire contemplation, but they are not careful to practice those things which are required for its attainment. It is also a great impediment that we rest so much upon signs and sensible things and have but little of perfect mortification.·

This chapter by itself is most significant and shows that the infused contemplation of the mysteries of salvation is highly desirable, that it is in the normal way of sanctity.

Farther on we find these words put on our Lord's lips:

I am He that in an instant elevateth the humble mind to comprehend more reasons of the eternal truth than if anyone had studied ten years in the schools. I teach without noise of words, without confusion of opinions, without ambition of honor, without strife of arguments. I am He who teacheth to despise earthly things, to loathe things present, to seek things eternal, to relish them . . . to desire nothing out of Me, and above all things ardently to love Me. For a certain person, by loving Me intimately, learned things divine and spoke wonders. He profited more by forsaking all things than by studying subtleties. But to some I speak things common, to others things more particular; to some I sweetly appear in signs and figures, to others in great light I reveal mysteries. . . . I within am the Teacher of truth, the Searcher of the heart, the Understander of thoughts, the Mover of actions, distributing to everyone as I judge fitting.[1]

From these excerpts it is evident that the contemplation spoken of by the author of *The Imitation* proceeds from a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which renders faith penetrating and sweet by making us taste how good the Lord is: "O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet." [8] Therefore the contemplation in question here is infused.

It is not a question, however, of extraordinary graces, such as visions, prophetic revelations, and the stigmata, but rather of an increasingly profound and sweet penetration of the mysteries of faith, which are superior to all particular contingent futures, like the end of a war which prophetic light reveals. We see consequently

• Bk. Ill, chap. 31.
' Bk. Ill, chap. 43.
•P». 33:9.

that the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith, here declared so highly desirable, is undoubtedly an eminent but not an essentially extraordinary grace; it is in the normal way of sanctity. And if at times the term "extraordinary" is applied to it, this is in the sense that it is extrinsically so, because it is rare; but it is not intrinsically so. Far from being essentially extraordinary, it is infused contemplation that establishes us in perfect order. Those only are in this perfect order who penetrate in this way into the inner life of God, who ardently love the One Thing necessary and see all earthly things in their true place. Thus the order of charity is established in all the feelings that are fully subordinated to the love of God and vivified by it.

Therefore, according to *The Imitation* all interior souls are called to this infused contemplation and the union with God resulting from it, at least by a general and remote call, if not by an individual and proximate call, which may be either simply sufficient, or efficacious and victorious over all resistance.®

In Book IV of *The Imitation,* which is devoted to the Eucharist, the faithful soul asks insistently for the ineffable union with Jesus Christ. We read: "Who will give me, O Lord, to find Thee alone, to open my whole heart to Thee, and enjoy Thee as my soul desireth . . . that Thou alone mayest speak to me, and I to Thee, as the beloved is wont to speak to his beloved, and a friend to be entertained with a friend. For this I pray, this I desire, that I may be wholly united to Thee, and that . . . I may more and more learn to relish things heavenly and eternal. . . . When shall I be wholly united to, and absorbed in Thee, and altogether unmindful of myself? Thou in me, and I in Thee; and thus grant us both equally to continue in one." 10

We read likewise in chapter 17: "O my God, Eternal Love, my whole good and never-ending happiness, I desire to receive Thee with the most vehement desire and most worthy reverence that any of the saints have ever had or could experience."

Again he says: "A lover of Jesus and the truth, a true interior per-

• The general and remote call is expressed in the Gospel and preaching; the individual and proximate call comes from a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which an enlightened and experienced director may rather easily recognize. We explained this subject at greater length in *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* pp. 337-45, 372-436.

10 Bk. IV, chap. 13.

son, who is free from inordinate affections, can freely turn himself to God, elevate himself above himself in spirit, and enjoy a delightful repose *(ac fruitive quiescere)"* 11 This is the quiet of fruition, a foretaste of eternal life.

The Dispositions Required or the Asceticism of *The Imitation*

To receive the special grace of infused contemplation and of the union with God resulting from it, the author of *The Imitation* demands especially the following dispositions: humility, consideration of the immense benefits of God, abnegation, purity of heart, and simplicity of intention.

The humility he requires is that which leads the soul to "love to live unknown and to be counted as nothing."12 It disposes us to consider the benefactions of God, all the graces that come to us from our Lord, through His passion, His death, the Eucharist. In the light of this consideration, the soul discovers its ingratitude and sincerely begs pardon for it.

In this way the soul is led to the abnegation of all self-will. Consequently in Book III, chapter 13, the Lord is made to say: "Learn to break thy own will and to yield thyself up to all subjections. Kindle wrath against thyself, suffer not the swelling of pride to live in thee; but show thyself so submissive and little that all may trample on thee, and tread thee under their feet as the dirt of the streets. . . . But Mine eye hath spared thee, because thy soul was precious in My sight; that thou mightest know My love, and mightest always live thankful for My favors." Abnegation thus understood puts self-love to death; it is a disappropriation by which the soul ceases to belong to itself that it may belong to God, ceases to seek itself that it may tend continually toward Him. The same doctrine is expressed in Book III, chapter 21. We read also in chapter 37 of the same book: "Forsake thyself, resign thyself, and thou shalt enjoy a great inward peace."

Purity of heart and simplicity of intention wholly directed toward God prepare the soul to receive the special grace of infused contemplation.13 This grace makes the soul understand the profound

11 Bk. II, chap. 1.
la The Imitation, Bk. I, chaps, 2 f.; Bk. Ill, chaps. 4, 8.
*·· Bk. II, chaps. 4, 6, 7, 8; Bk. Ill, chap. 5.

meaning of these words: "Whoever findeth Jesus findeth a good treasure, a good above every good." [14]

From this contemplation are bom the trusting abandonment and union, expressed in the following petition: "Thou dost will, O my God, that I receive Thee and unite myself to Thee in love. Wherefore, I beseech Thy clemency, and I beg of Thee to give me a special grace, that I may be wholly dissolved in Thee, and overflow with Thy love, and no more concern myself about seeking any other consolation."[15] With this in mind, one may grasp the depths of the splendid chapter 5 of Book III on the marvelous effects of divine love which "carrieth the burden without being burdened, and maketh all else that is bitter sweet and savory. The noble love of Jesus impelleth us to do great things, and exciteth us always to desire that which is the more perfect. . . . Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing stronger, nothing higher, nothing wider, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller or better in heaven or in earth: for love is born of God, and it cannot rest but in God."

In a mortified soul which no longer seeks itself, such is the fruit of the contemplation of the sovereign Good: that union with God which is truly the normal prelude of the union of eternity.

The passages we have quoted clearly demonstrate the truth of the statement made at the beginning of this chapter: namely, that *The Imitation* is not only an ascetical but also a mystical book; it leads to the practice of the virtues in view of the infused contemplation of the goodness of God and of union with Him. Manifestly addressed to all interior souls, *The Imitation* is, in fact, read by all of them. In other words, the true mysticism of which it speaks is accessible to all, if they are willing to follow the way of humility, abnegation, persevering prayer, and docility to the Holy Ghost.

This is one of the strongest reasons in favor of the doctrine we set forth in this work on the normal prelude of eternal life.

[14] Bk. II, chap. 8.

[15] Bk. IV, chap. 4. This is the union of enjoyment through Eucharistic Communion. The Latin version brings out the thought more clearly: "Vis ergo, Domine, ut te suscipiam, et me ipsum tibi in caritate uniam. Unde tuam precor clementiam et specialem ad hoc imploro mihi donari gratiam, ut totus in te liquefiam et amore pereffluam, atque de nulla aliena consolatione amplius me intromittam."

CHAPTER XXVIII

Contemplative Prayer

The Passage from Acquired Prayer to Initial Infused Prayer

OUR treatment of docility to the Holy Ghost, of the infinite value of the Mass, of the Communion of proficients, and of the mysticism of *The Imitation,* prepares us to consider what should be the contemplative prayer of those who advance in the illuminative way.

We treated in Volume 1[1] of the mental prayer of beginners, of its progressive simplification, and of perseverance in this interior prayer. In our discussion of the prayer of proficients we shall see, first of all, how St. Francis de Sales sums up the traditional teaching on this point, using the principles of St. Thomas to illuminate his doctrine. Next, we shall see what constitutes the beginning of contemplative prayer in the opinion of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, which will enable us to get some idea of how it should develop.

The Passage from Meditation to Contemplation According to the Traditional Teaching Expressed by St. Francis de Sales

The holy Bishop of Geneva sets forth his teaching on this subject in his *Treatise on the Love of God.*[*] In the *Introduction to a Devout Life,*[3] he had already described meditation, which is an act of the understanding by which it makes one or more considerations

1 Cf. Vol. I, chaps. 35 f.
• Bk. VI, chaps. 1, 3, 5, *6,* 7.
• Part II, chap. a.

in order to excite our affections for God and divine things. The mind meditates on a subject with the aid of the imagination and of discourse or reasoning. Resolutions must be made after the affections, and the meditation should end with thanksgiving, with an offering of self, and a petition to God to grant us His grace that we may put into practice the resolutions He has inspired in us.

But if one perseveres in this way, meditation becomes simplified affective prayer in which the various acts tend to fuse into a single act. Thus the faithful soul is gradually raised to contemplation, which is "a loving, simple, and fixed attention of the mind on divine things." [4] At this moment the life of the soul is entirely simple and concentrated on the object that it loves; the soul looks with a simple gaze at a perfection of God, especially at His goodness, or the radiation of it in some divine work.[5]

Consequently, says St. Francis de Sales, "prayer is called meditation until it has produced the honey of devotion; after that it changes into contemplation. . . . Thus, as bees draw nectar from the flowers, we meditate to gather the love of God, but, having gathered it, we contemplate God and are attentive to His goodness because of the sweetness that love makes us find in it."[5] In other words, meditation prepares for the act of love of God, whereas contemplation follows it.

From this fact springs a second difference: "Meditation considers in minute detail and, as it were, item by item the objects that are suitable to excite our love; but contemplation gazes with simplicity and concentration on the object that it loves." [7] We no longer linger over one detail or another; we attain to a general view which dwells on God with admiration and love, as the gaze of an artist rests on nature, or that of a child on his mother's features.

A third difference springs from the two preceding: whereas meditation is not made without effort, "contemplation is made with pleasure, in that it presupposes that one has found God and His holy love." [8] Nevertheless contemplation has its hours of dark night in which the soul, now eager for God, keenly feels Flis absence by

[4] *Treatise on the Love of God,* Bk. VI, chap. 3.
[5] *Ibid.,* chap. 6.
[6] *Ibid.,* chap. 3.
[7] *Ibid.,* chap. 5.
[8] *Ibid.,* Bk. VI, chap. 6.

reason of the ardent desire it has to possess Him, a desire in which it unites itself in trial to His good pleasure.[9]

St. Francis de Sales concludes: "Holy contemplation being the end and the purpose to which all spiritual exercises tend, they are all reduced to it, and those who practice them are called contemplatives." [10] However, on the subject of the loving recollection of the soul in contemplation, the holy doctor adds: "We do not make this recollection by choice, inasmuch as it is not in our power to have it whenever we wish; it does not depend on our care; but God produces it in us when it pleases Him by His most holy grace." [11]

The Principles of This Traditional Teaching According to St. Thomas

The teaching of St. Francis de Sales, which we have just quoted, springs from the very notion of supernatural contemplation such as we find it in the works of St. Thomas.

St. Thomas shows in the *Summa* [12] that contemplation is an act of the intellect superior to reasoning, a simple view of the truth;[13] and, when it is a question not of philosophical contemplation, but of that contemplation which the saints speak of, it springs from love, not only from the love of the knowledge habitual to philosophers, but from the love of God, from charity.[14] It proceeds consequently from living faith enlightened by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, especially by those of understanding and wisdom, which render faith penetrating and sweet.[16] Supernatural contemplation thus con-

[9] *Ibid.,* Bk. IX, chap. 2: "The union of our will with the good pleasure of God is made principally in tribulations"; chap. 11: "On the perplexity of the heart which loves, without knowing whether it is pleasing to the Beloved"; chaps. 12-14: "On the death of the will (mystical death) and holy indifference"; chap. 16: "On the perfect denudation of the soul united to the will of God."

[10] *Ibid.,* Bk. VI, chap. 6.

[11] *Ibid.,* chap. 7.

[12] Cf. IIa IIae, q. 180.

[13] *Ibid.,* a. 3, 4, 6.

[14] *Ibid.,* a. 1; *ibid.,* a. 7 ad mm: "It is through charity that one is urged to the contemplation of God. And since the end corresponds to the beginning, it follows that the term also and the end of the contemplative life has its being in the appetite, since one delights in seeing the object loved, and the very delight in the object seen arouses a yet greater love." Cf. *ibid.,* a. 3 ad 3um.

[15] Cf. IIa IIae, q. 8, a. 1, 2, 4, *6, y,* q. 45, a. 1, 2, 5, *6.*

ceived supposes the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which His gifts dispose us to receive with promptness and docility,[18] as the wide-spread sails on a boat receive the impulsion of a favorable wind; then the boat advances more easily than by the labor of the rowers, a symbol of discursive meditation united to the practice of the virtues. From this point of view, contemplation, because of the special inspiration which it supposes, deserves to be called, not acquired but infused, although at the beginning it may quite frequently be prepared for by reading, affective meditation, and the prayer of petition.[17] The soul thus actively prepares itself to receive the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which will at times be strong enough so that discursive meditation will no longer be necessary, as when a favorable wind is strong enough to make the boat advance, the work of the rowers may cease.

This special inspiration of the Holy Ghost given to make us taste the mysteries of faith, uses the connaturality or sympathy with divine things that is rooted in charity.[18] This special inspiration gives rise in us to an act of infused love and of living, penetrating, and sweet faith, which shows us how revealed mysteries, although still obscure, wonderfully correspond to our deepest and loftiest aspirations. These acts of love and of penetrating and sweet faith are said to be infused, not only because they proceed from infused virtues, in this case from the theological virtues, but because they suppose a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and because we cannot move ourselves to them with the help of common actual grace. In this case God moves us, not by inclining us to deliberate, but to acts above all discursive deliberation.[19] For example, on reading the Gospel of the day at Mass, some expression that we have read many times is illuminated and captivates us, such as the words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman: "If thou didst know the gift of God!" [20] In like manner a preacher vividly experiences this illumination we are speaking of when at first he feels deeply his powerlessness to preach the Passion in a fitting manner on Good Friday, and then receives the

[18] Cf. Ia Ilae, q.68, a. i: "The gifts are perfections of man, whereby he is disposed so as to be amenable to the promptings of God." *Ibid.,* a. 2, 3, 5.

[17] *Summa,* IIa Ilae, q. 180, a.3 ad 4am.

[*] *Ibid.,* q.45, a.2; a.5.

[u] *Summa,* Ia Ilae, q. in, a. 2: "Whether grace is fittingly divided into operating and cooperating grace."

[*] John 4:10.

animating breath which vivifies his thought, his will, and his feelings, that he may do good to souls.

At times contemplation rises toward God by a straight movement from a sensible fact, for example, from a parable such as that of the prodigal son, to the wonderful vision of the divine mercy.[21] At other times contemplation rises by an oblique movement, for example, from the mysteries of salvation, from those of the childhood of our Savior and of His passion, to the living and profound thought of eternal life.

Lastly, there is occasionally contemplation, called circular, of the infinite goodness of God which radiates on all things, on all the mysteries of salvation. This prayer is a very simple, most loving gaze, which reminds one of the circular flight of the eagle high up in the air, hovering as it gazes at the sun and its radiation over the horizon.[22]

These principles thus formulated by St. Thomas illumine the traditional teaching on contemplative prayer which we found expressed in the works of St. Francis de Sales. This same teaching appears also in a concrete and experiential form in the writings of St. Teresa.

21 Cf. Ila Ilae, q. 180, a. 6: "Whether the operation of contemplation is fittingly divided into a threefold movement, circular, straight, and oblique."

22 A close study of what St. Thomas, following Dionysius the Mystic, says of these spiritual movements in Ila Ilae, q. 180, a. 6, will show that they must be conceived in the following manner.

By the straight movement, man contemplates God in the mirror of sensible things or in that of the evangelical parables. The soul rises directly from a particularly expressive sensible fact, such as the parable of the Good Shepherd, to the contemplation of the infinite goodness of God.

By the spiral or oblique movement, the soul contemplates God in the mirror of intelligible truths or of the mysteries of salvation, with which it is already familiar. By a spiral movement, which recalls the flight of certain birds, it rises from the mysteries of the Incarnation, the redemption, the Eucharist, the life of the Church, to infinite mercy which radiates in them. The Rosary prepares us for this spiral movement, which is also similar to the ascent of a mountain by a winding road.

By the circular movement, the soul contemplates God in Himself in the penumbra of loving faith. Here the soul rises above the multiplicity of sensible images and ideas and, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, is united in a holy manner by a loving and sweet knowledge to the hidden God, whose goodness surpasses all our ideas, and even all the formulas of faith, as the sky includes all the stars which manifest its depths to us.

The Acquired Prayer of Recollection and Passive Recollection According to St. Teresa

The passage from acquired to infused prayer is illumined in the light of what St. Teresa wrote about the last of the acquired prayers, which she calls "the acquired prayer of recollection,"[23] and about initial infused prayer, which she calls "supernatural or passive recollection."[24]

The saint describes the last or the highest of the acquired prayers as follows:

It is called (active) "recollection," because *by its means the soul collects together all the faculties and enters within itself*[25] to be with God. The divine Master thus comes more speedily than He otherwise would to teach it and to grant the prayer of quiet. For, being retired within itself, the spirit can meditate on the Passion and can there picture in its thoughts the Son, and can offer Him to the Father without tiring the mind by journeying to find Him on Mount Calvary, or in the garden, or at the column.

Those who are able thus to enclose themselves within the little heaven of their soul where dwells the Creator of both heaven and earth, and who can accustom themselves not to look at anything nor to remain in any place which would preoccupy their exterior senses, may feel sure that they are traveling by an excellent way, and that they will certainly attain to drink of the water from the fountain, for they will journey far in a short time. They resemble a man who goes by sea, and who, if the weather is favorable, gets in a few days to the end of a voyage which would have taken far longer by land. These souls may be said to have already put out to sea, and though they have not quite lost sight of land, still they *do their best* to get away from it by recollecting their faculties.

If this recollection is genuine it is easily discerned, for it produces a certain effect that I cannot describe, but which will be recognized by those who know it from personal experience. The soul seems to rise from play—for it sees that earthly things are but toys—and therefore mounts to higher things. Like one who retires into a strong fortress to be out of danger, it withdraws the senses from outward things, so thoroughly despising them that involuntarily the eyes close so as to veil from the sight what is visible, in order that the eyes of the soul may see more clearly.

23. *The Way of Perfection,* chap. 28.
24. *The Interior Castle,* fourth mansion, chap. 3.
25. In this long passage we italicize all that shows that it is an active and not a passive recollection in which die soul recollects itself.

Those who practice this prayer almost always keep their eyes shut during it. This is an excellent custom for many reasons. . . . The soul appears to gather strength and to dominate itself at the expense of the body. . . . By persevering in the habit [of recollecting itself] for several days, and by controlling ourselves, the benefits that result will become clear. We shall find that when we begin to pray the bees (symbol of the different faculties) will return to the hive and enter it to make the honey without any effort on our part, for our Lord is pleased *to reward the soul and the will by this empire over the powers* in return for the time spent in restraining them. Thus the mind only requires to make them a sign that it wishes to be recollected, and the senses will immediately obey us and retire within themselves. . . . When the will recalls them they return more quickly, until after they have re-entered a number of times, our Lord is pleased that they should settle entirely in perfect contemplation.[28]

These last words refer to infused prayer, prepared for by active prayer or the acquired prayer of recollection, just described and also called simplified affective prayer.[27] The very slow and loving meditation on some of the petitions of the Our Father is a good preparation for it.[28] Thus acquired prayer prepares the soul for infused prayer.[28]

[28] *The Way of Perfection,* chap. 28.

[27] In chapter 29 of *The Way of Perfection,* St. Teresa states clearly the nature of this last acquired prayer and shows that in it there is a disposition to receive infused contemplation: "I advise whoever wishes to acquire this habit (which, as I said, we have the power to gain) not to grow tired in trying gradually to obtain the mastery over herself. . . . I know that, with His help, if you practice it for a year, or perhaps for only six months, you will gain it. Think what a short time that is for so great an advantage as laying this firm foundation, so that if our Lord wishes to raise you to a high degree of prayer, He will find you prepared for it, since you keep close to Him."

In chapter 19 of *The Way of Perfection,* speaking of infused contemplation and of the living waters of prayer, St. Teresa enunciates this *general principle* which she later develops in chapters 20-24, 29› 33: *"Remember, our Lord invited 'any man' ('Come to Me, all you,'* Matt. 11:28): He is truth itself; His word cannot be doubted. If *all* had not been included, He would not have addressed everybody, nor would He have said: 'I will give you to drink.' He might have said: 'Let all men come, for they will lose nothing by it, and I will give to drink to those I think fit for it.' But as He said unconditionally: 'If *any* man thirst, let him come to Me,' *I feel sure that, unless they stop halfway, none will fail to drink of this living water."*

St. Catherine of Siena teaches the same doctrine in her *Dialogue,* chaps. 53 f·

[28] *The Way of Perfection,* chaps. 30-38.

[20] In *Christian Perfection and Contemplation* (pp. 345-82), we treated at

St. Teresa describes initial infused prayer, that of supernatural or passive recollection, which precedes the prayer of quiet, as follows:

This is a kind of recollection which, I believe, is *supernatural* (like the prayer of quiet). There is no occasion to retire nor to shut the eyes, nor does it depend on anything exterior; involuntarily the eyes suddenly close and solitude is found. *Without any labor of one's own,* the temple of which I spoke is reared for the soul in which to pray; the senses and exterior surroundings appear to lose their hold, while the spirit gradually regains its lost sovereignty. . . .

But do not fancy you can gain it [this recollection] by thinking of God dwelling within you, or by imagining Him as present in your soul. . . . By *the divine assistance everyone can practice it,* but what I mean is quite a different thing. Sometimes, before they have begun to think of God, . . . *the soul is keenly conscious of a delicious sense of recollection.* . . . Here it is not in our power to retire into ourselves, unless God gives us the grace. In my opinion, His Majesty only bestows this favor on those who have renounced the world. . . . He thus specially calls them to devote themselves to spiritual things; if they allow Him power to act freely, He will bestow still greater graces on those whom He thus begins calling to a higher life.[80]

The saint adds: "Unless His Majesty has begun to suspend our faculties, I cannot understand how we are to stop thinking, without doing ourselves more harm than good," [81] for then we would remain in idleness or the somnolence of the quietists.

"The supernatural recollection" which St. Teresa describes in the preceding passages is clearly a mystical prayer, the beginning of infused contemplation, for which simplified affective meditation prepares the soul.[82]

length of this disposition and the general and remote call of interior souls to the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith. The general and remote call should be distinguished from the individual and proximate call, which may be either sufficient or efficacious.

iOThe Interior Castle, fourth mansion, chap. 3.

« *Ibid.*

82 Simplified affective meditation, especially as it is found in active recollection, described above *(The Way,* chap. 28), has quite often since the seventeenth century been called "acquired contemplation." We prefer the expression "simplified acquired prayer," for when the great spiritual writers, especially St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa, speak of contemplation without qualifying it, they always mean infused contemplation, at least initial infused contemplation, although this last may often be preceded by a certain acquired prayer which prepares the soul for it, and which is symbolized by

What we have just said about the beginning of infused contemplation according to the teaching of St. Francis de Sales and St. Teresa conforms perfectly to what St. John of the Cross teaches when, in *The Dark Night,*[33] he treats of the night of the senses, or the passive purification of the sensible faculties, which in his opinion marks, as we have seen,[34]*the transition from the purgative to the illuminative way. In *The Dark Night* he says expressly: "The night of sense is common, and the lot of many: these are the beginners."[35] And he adds: "The soul began to set out on the way of the spirit, the way of proficients, which is also called the illuminative way, or the way of infused contemplation, wherein God Himself teaches and refreshes the soul without meditation or any active efforts that itself may deliberately make."[36] The work of the virtues should certainly continue at times even to heroic acts, but prayer becomes increasingly simplified, and the soul ought especially to be docile to the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

St. John of the Cross agrees perfectly with St. Thomas when he writes: "Contemplation is the science of love, which is an infused loving knowledge of God."[37] "This dark contemplation is called secret, because it is, as I have said before, the mystical theology which

the work of the *noria* (water wheel) of which St. Teresa speaks *(Life,* chap. 15).

When St. Teresa speaks of "contemplation," she always means infused contemplation. One may be convinced of this by reading the passages in her works where she begins to use this word; cf. *The Way,* chaps. 18, 19, 20, 21, 25, 27, 31, and *The Interior Castle,* fourth and fifth mansions. It is also evident that St. John of the Cross is speaking of infused contemplation in *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chaps. 8, 9, 14 ff., and also in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* beginning with chaps. 11 and 12 of Book II.

On simplified affective prayer, see also Bossuet's opuscule: *Manière courte et facile pour faire l'oraison en foi et de simple présence de Dieu.* The prayer of simplicity described by Bossuet seems to be acquired in its first phase and infused in its second, when the soul receives the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost and when the superhuman mode of the gifts of the Holy Ghost begins to be manifested. Then the soul is rather passive titan active; it knows and loves under the special inspiration of the interior Master.

[33] Bk. I, chaps. 8 ff.

[34] Cf. *supra,* chap. 4: "The passive purification of the senses and the entrance into the illuminative way: the three signs of initial infused contemplation under the form of arid quiet before consoled quiet." Cf. St. Jane de Chantal, *L'Oraison de quiétude (Œuvres diverses,* Paris, 1876, II, 268).

[35] Bk. I, chap. 8.

[36] *Ibid.,* chap. 14.

[37] Bk. II, chap. 18.

theologians call secret wisdom, and which according to St. Thomas[88] is infused into the soul more especially by love. This happens in a secret hidden way. . . . The faculties of the soul cannot acquire it, it being the Holy Ghost who infuses it into the soul." [89] It is the eminent exercise of the theological virtues and of the gifts which accompany them. If this infused and loving contemplation lasts for a certain time, it is called a state of prayer, a passive state or at least one that is more passive than active, for we cannot produce it, but only prepare ourselves for it.

This teaching is identical with that of *The Imitation* and thus lends additional confirmation to the statement in *The Imitation,* quoted in the preceding chapter: "There are found so few contemplative persons, because there are few that know how to sequester themselves entirely from perishable creatures."[40] In other words, the infused contemplation of revealed mysteries, which proceeds from living faith illumined by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, is in the normal way of sanctity or of heaven, provided we persevere in prayer, carry our cross daily in a supernatural manner, and are docile to the Holy Ghost. Then living faith becomes during prayer penetrating and often sweet, in such a way that we can live profoundly by the revealed mysteries of the redemptive Incarnation, the Mass, the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in our souls; we can live profoundly by them and taste them; this is the normal prelude of the life of heaven.

[88] *Summa,* IIa IIae, q. 180, a. 1.
[89] *The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chap. 17.
[40] Bk. III, chap. 31.

CHAPTER XXIX

The Errors of the Quietists on Contemplation and Pure Love

WE find in the condemnation of several errors a confirmation of the traditional doctrine on initial infused prayer which we have just set forth. We shall consider the errors of quietism, then those of semi-quietism.

The Quietism of Molinos

The propositions of Molinos, which were condemned in 1687,[1] show that quietism deviates from the traditional doctrine to the point of becoming a caricature of Catholic mysticism, which it perverts in its most fundamental principles.

According to Molinos, man should annihilate his faculties, for the desire to act offends God, who wishes to be the only one to act in us. Activity is the enemy of grace, vows to accomplish certain acts are an obstacle to perfection. In refraining from acting, the soul annihilates itself and returns to its principle; then God reigns and lives in it. Such is the interior way, in which the soul no longer produces acts of knowledge, or of love of God, and no longer thinks of eternal life, or of the sufferings of hell. It ought not to desire to know whether it is pleasing to God, nor reflect on its acts, nor on its defects to be corrected; it should not desire its own perfection, its salvation, nor ask God for anything definite. It no longer needs to resist temptations, with which it should no longer concern itself?

In prayer, according to the quietists, man must remain in ob-

[1] Denzinger, *Enchiridion,* nos. 1221-88. Cf. Dudon, S.J., *Michel Molinos,* 1921.

[»] Denzinger, nos. «275-86.

scute faith, in a repose in which he forgets every distinct thought relative to the humanity of Christ, or even to the divine perfections, to the Blessed Trinity. He must remain in this repose without producing any act. As for the knowledge of obscure faith, it is not an act produced by the creature, but a knowledge coming from God alone; it is, said Molinos, an acquired contemplation which is acquired by the cessation of our own operations.[3]

It is evident, therefore, that this acquired contemplation, which Molinos advised for all, was a passivity acquired at will by the cessation of every operation. Consequently he attributed to the contemplation acquired in this manner what is true only of infused contemplation, and with one stroke of the pen he suppressed all asceticism and the practice of the virtues, considered by tradition to be the real preparation for infused contemplation and union with God.[4] All spirituality was thus radically perverted.

According to these principles, Molinos maintained that contemplation continues during sleep, that distaste for spiritual things is good; he confounded voluntary spiritual sloth, or acedia, with involuntary aridity, which is found in the passive purifications of the senses and the spirit. He went so far as to say that the use of the sacraments and the practice of good works are indifferent matters, and that acquired contemplation leads to impeccability, in which one need no longer resist temptations, even when they lead to immodest acts.[5]

One of the initial errors of Spanish quietism was to consider the prayer of quiet as acquired at will (by the suppression of acts), whereas in reality it is infused, as St. Teresa shows in the fourth mansion of *The Interior Castle*.[6]

In his *Précis de théologie ascétique et mystique* (no. 1484), Father A. Tanquerey juxtaposes exactly the errors of Molinos and Catholic doctrine. We have added several clarifying statements to his outline:

[3] *Ibid.,* no. 1243.
[4] *Ibid.,* no. 1246.
[5] *Ibid.,* nos. 1275-86.
[6] Cf. Dudon, S.J., *Michel Molinos.* In this work (pp. 260-61, 267f.) the author maintains as we do that "there is no contemplation worthy of this name except passive contemplation. . . . And God, in *His common providence,* favors with it those who by the heroic generosity of their virtue show themselves worthy of being treated as privileged friends."

Catholic Doctrine	*Errors of Molinos*
(i) There is one *passive state* in which God acts in us by His operating grace; but one reaches it *normally* only after having practiced the virtues and meditation for a long time.	There is only one way, the interior way or the way of *passive contemplation which one can acquire* through one's own efforts, with common grace, by the cessation of every operation. One should therefore enter it at once.
(2) The act of contemplation ordinarily lasts only a short time, although the state of soul which results from it may last for several days.	The act of contemplation may last for entire years and even for a lifetime, even during sleep, without being repeated.
(3) Contemplation united to the act of love of God contains eminently *the acts of all the Christian virtues,* but does not dispense us from making explicit acts of these virtues outside the time of contemplation.	Contemplation being perpetual dispenses from all the explicit acts of the virtues, which are only for beginners: for example, acts of faith, hope, religion, mortification, confession, and so forth.
(4) The *principal object* of contemplation is God Himself, but Christ is the secondary object of it, and outside of the contemplative act one is not dispensed from thinking about Jesus Christ, the necessary Mediator, or from going to God through Him.	It is an imperfection to think of Jesus Christ and His mysteries; it is necessary and sufficient to lose oneself in the divine essence. He who makes use of images or ideas does not adore God in spirit and in truth.
(5) *Holy abandonment* is a perfect way, but it should not go so far as indifference in regard to eternal salvation; on the contrary, one should desire it, hope for it, and ask for it.	In the state of contemplation, one must be indifferent to everything, even to one's own sanctification, to one's salvation, and lose hope that love may be disinterested.
(6) In interior trials the imagination and sensibility may be profoundly troubled, whereas	One should not trouble oneself to resist temptations; the most obscene mental images, the

the fine point of the soul enjoys deep peace; but the will is still obliged to resist temptations, at least indirectly by rising above them or creating a diversion in order not to consent to them.

acts which result from them are not reprehensible because they are the work of the devil. They are passive trials that the saints themselves experienced, and one must take care not to confess them. In this way one attains to self-contempt, to perfect purity, and to very close union with God.

The quietism of Molinos thus ended in manifestly immoral consequences. It was taken up again in an attenuated form without these consequences by Madame Guyon, who, having been widowed while still young, rushed ardently into an imaginative and emotional piety which she called the way of pure love, or the short road. She won over to her ideas, first of all, Father Lacombe, a Barnabite, then in a measure, Fénelon.

Semi-Quietism

The attenuated quietism of Fénelon,[7] which was condemned in 1699,[8] had to do with errors relative to pure love. The principal error consisted in teaching that in the state of perfect contemplation the soul enters a sort of complete annihilation, that it is in the presence of God, entirely resigned to His holy will and indifferent to its salvation or damnation.

This doctrine thus failed to recognize the obligation of Christian hope; it forgot that the saints in their greatest trials "against hope believed in hope," according to the expression of St. Paul.[9] It also forgot that to sacrifice the desire of our salvation would be to sacrifice charity itself, which leads us to wish to glorify God eternally by the knowledge and love which the blessed enjoy in heaven.

The divine precepts relative to hope and charity, far from being mutually contradictory, are mutually strengthening. By hope, we desire to possess God without subordinating Him to ourselves;[10]

[7] *Œuvres de Fénelon,* ed. Gosselin, IV, and *Maximes des saints,* new ed. by A. Chérel, 1911.

[8] Denzinger, nos. 1327-49.

[9] Rom. 4:18.

[10] Cf. Cajetan, *In Ham Ilae,* q. 17, a.j. By hope, he says, we desire God for

by charity, which vivifies hope instead of destroying it, we love God for Himself, and in order to glorify Him eternally we desire our own salvation and that of other souls. Thus zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls is the ardor of one and the same love, whose first object is God and whose second is ourselves and our neighbor.

Among the errors of semi-quietism the following are also important: "There is a state of contemplation so sublime and perfect that it becomes habitual, to such an extent that each time the soul prays, its prayer is contemplative and not discursive. When this state is reached, the soul need never more return to meditation and methodical acts." "The mystical saints excluded the exercise of the virtues from the state of transformed souls." [11]

Fénelon, who submitted humbly to the condemnation, was led into error especially by a falsified edition of the *Entretiens spirituels de saint François de Sales,* published at Lyons in 1628 by a certain Drobet. Bossuet, in the course of his controversy with Fénelon, made a deep study of the questions relative to prayer, and it is a known fact that in his opinion the "prayer in faith and of the simple presence of God," which in its second phase is initial infused contemplation, is in the normal way of sanctity.[12]

All the errors contained in the *Maximes des saints,* which were condemned in 1699 in twenty-three propositions,[13] may be reduced, according to Bossuet, to the four following propositions: (1) "There is in this life a *habitual state* of pure love in which *the desire for eternal salvation no longer exists.* (2) In the final trials of the interior life, a soul may be persuaded by an *invincible and deliberate* conviction that it is reprobated by God, and in this belief it may make the *absolute sacrifice* of its eternal happiness. (3) In the state of pure love, the soul is *indifferent in regard to its own perfection and the practices of virtue.* (4) Contemplative souls lose, in certain states, the *distinct,* sensible, and reflective *view of Jesus Christ."* [14]

ourselves, but already for God's sake, in the sense that God is the end of the act of hope and of all the acts of virtue. On the contrary, when we desire something inferior to ourselves, we desire it for ourselves and because of ourselves, *nobis et propter nos.*

[11] Denzinger, nos. 1342, 1347.

[12] Cf. Bossuet, *Manière courte et facile pour faire l'oraison en foi et de simple présence de Dieu.*

[13] Cf. Denzinger, nos. 1327 ff.

[14] Cf. *Œuvres de Bossuet; Relation sur le quiétisme.* The articles of Issy,

We italicized in these propositions what is particularly erroneous. What is true is: (i) that in the perfect the desire of beatitude is often inspired by charity and that there are *moments* in which they do not think explicitly of their salvation, (z) If some saints have had in the lower part of the soul the impression of being reprobate, it was not a reflective persuasion of the higher part, and if they made the sacrifice of their salvation, it was in a *conditional* and *not an absolute* manner. (3) Even in the highest states of perfection, the saints recommend concern about *progress* and the *fundamental virtues.* (4) Even in the transforming union, many saints, like St. Teresa, have had visions of our Savior's *humanity;* what is true is that in certain transitory moments the perfect soul, absorbed in the contemplation of the Deity, does not think explicitly of it.

The Problem of Pure Love

We treated the question of pure love at length in *The Love of God and the Cross of Jesus.*[16] We shall give here a brief summary of our teaching.

The problems of pure love may be stated as follows: Will our love of God always be tainted by self-love? Is pure love possible, and, if so, what is its relation to love of oneself, which seems to be the basis of our natural tendencies?

The errors to be avoided are mutually contradictory; the truth rises like a summit in the midst of these deviations and above them. Under the pretext of pure love, the quietists went so far as to require the absolute sacrifice of the desire of salvation or of personal happiness,[10] and they said that the saints make this sacrifice in the passive purifications of the spirit. On the other hand, it is possible to fall into a practical naturalism which disregards the spirit of sacrifice and believes that without it one can succeed in loving God perfectly and more than oneself. Evidently the truth is above these two opposing deviations.

The saints have often described ardent love of God, insisting on[18]

the result of the conferences held between Bossuet, Noailles, bishop of Châlons, Fénelon, and M. Tronson, 1694-93.

15 Vol. I, pp. 55-135.

18 Cf. Denzinger, "Errores de amore puro," *Enchiridion,* nos. 1328, 1331, 1333» 1336·

its disinterestedness and its holy follies.[17] Thus St. Paul writes: "For I wished myself to be an anathema from Christ, for my brethren." [18] St. Thomas explains this passage as follows: "He wished to be deprived *for a time* of the divine fruition which pertains to love of oneself, in order that God might be honored in his neighbor, which pertains to the love of God." [19] But the same St. Paul says that in the greatest trials, man must, Eke Abraham, "against hope believe in hope,"[20] and therefore never renounce salvation; to do so, moreover, would be to sacrifice charity itself or the desire to glorify God eternally. The sacrifice of our happiness cannot, therefore, be absolute, but only conditional and temporary; further, in the saints it is not a permanent state, but a transport of love lasting some moments.[21]

The following difficulty remains to be solved. How is the ardent, disinterested love of the saints reconciled with our natural inclinations, in particular with love of oneself? St. Thomas [22] answers this difficulty by pointing out that by nature we are inclined to love God, the Author and Preserver of our nature, more than ourselves, as in an organism the part naturally loves the whole more than itself, the hand sacrificing itself to save the body. Otherwise the natural inclination which comes from God, the Author of nature, would not be good, and grace, charity, not only would not perfect it, but would destroy it.[28]

The natural inclination to love God, the Author of our nature,

[17] Cf. St. Bernard, *Sermons sur le Cantique des Cantiques,* Sermons LXXIX, LXXXIII, VIII. Richard of St. Victor, *De quattuor gradibus violentae caritatis, PL,* CXCVI, 1213-15, translated into French: *Les Quatre degrés de l'amour ardent,* by E. Leclef, Editions of *La Vie spirituelle.*

See also *The Imitation,* Bk. Ill, chap. 54 and chap. 5: "Of the wonderful effect of divine love"; St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chaps. 19, 20; "The ten degrees of divine love according to St. Bernard."

[18] Rom. 9:3.

[19] Cf. Ila Ilae, q. 27, a. 8 ad mm.

[20] Rom. 4:18.

[21] Cf. Massoulié, O.P., *Traité de l'amour de Dieu,* Bk. I, chap. 5; Bk. II, chap, i, par. 2; treatise written at the time of quietism. Meynard, O.P., *Traité de la vie intérieure* (3rd ed., 1889), I, nos. 221-22, pp. 369-83.

[22] *Summa,* la, q.6o, a. 5.

[28] St. Thomas speaks in like terms in several places in his works: *11 Sent.,* d.3, q.3; *Hl Sent.,* d.29, q.i, a.3; *In librum Dionysii de div. nominibus,* chap. 4, lect. 9f.; la Ilae, q.109, a.3; Ila Ilae, q.26, a.3: "Whether, out of charity, man is bound to love God more than himself"; *Quodlibet,* I, q.4, a.3.

was attenuated by original sin [24] and by our personal sins, the results of which must be mortified; but it subsists in the depths of our will, and charity elevates this tendency, making us love God, the Author of grace, more than ourselves. Consequently in loving rightly the superior part of ourselves, we love our Creator still more, and to cease to will our own perfection would be to turn away from God.[25] This is what the quietists did not understand when they asked, in the midst of the great passive purifications, not hope against all hope,[28] but the absolute sacrifice of beatitude.[27] This would have constituted at the same time the sacrifice of charity or the desire to glorify God eternally.

They did not understand that by hope we desire God for ourselves, not subordinating Him to ourselves, as a fruit is inferior to us, but subordinating ourselves to Him: "By hope we desire God for ourselves, not because of ourselves," [28] for the ultimate end of the act of hope is God Himself. Further, by charity we love God in a superior manner, formally for Himself, and we then desire to possess Him in order to glorify Him eternally.

Thus perfect charity, far from destroying hope, vivifies it and renders it increasingly meritorious. One thus avoids the two contrary errors of quietism and of naturalism opposed to the spirit of sacrifice; and, during the passive purifications, the love of God and neighbor is increasingly purified of all inordinate self-love or of all self-seeking. Finally, ardent love, under the form of zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, is victorious over all egoism, as we see in the lives of great saints.[29]

" Cf. Ia Ilae, q. 109, a. 3.

Summa, Ila Ilae, q.25, a.7: "The wicked know not themselves aright, they do not love themselves aright . . . , but the good know themselves truly, and therefore truly love themselves."

[28] Cf. Rom. 4:18.

[17] Cf. Denzinger, no. 1232: "Qui suum liberum arbitrium Deo donavit de nulla re debet curam habere, nec de inferno, nec de paradiso; nec debet desiderium habere propriae perfectionis, nec virtutum, nec propriae sanctitatis, nec propriae salutis, cujus spem purgare debet." *Ibid.,* nos. 1344-45.

[28] Cf. Cajetan, *In IIam Ilae,* q. 17, a. 5, no. 6: "It is one thing to desire this for myself, and another to desire it because of myself."

[29] St. Thomas thus sums up his teaching (Ila Ilae, q. 19, a.6): "Whether servile fear remains with charity: Self-love may stand in a threefold relationship to charity. In one way it is contrary to charity, when a man places his end in the love of his own good. In another way it is included in charity, when a man loves himself for the sake of God and in God. In a third way,

In What the Practice of Pure Love Consists

The practice of pure love consists chiefly in abandonment to Providence and to the divine will of good pleasure. This act of abandonment supposes faith and hope, and in it there is a love of God that is daily more pure.

The quietists were, therefore, mistaken in excluding hope from the most perfect state; it should be only subordinated to charity, vivified by it, and finally it should become heroic hope "against hope" as we see in the lives of the saints.

The quietists also erred in excluding from the state of perfection attention to the practice of the virtues and positive resistance to temptations. They failed to consider as they should that abandonment to the divine will of good pleasure should be accompanied by conformity to the divine will signified by the precepts, the counsels (at least the spirit of the counsels), and events.[30]*It is constant fidelity to the divine will signified from moment to moment that enables man to abandon himself without presumption, with confidence and love, to God's will of good pleasure, on which the future depends. The signified will is consequently the domain of obedience, and the will of good pleasure that of abandonment. Thus balance is kept above the slothful quiet of the quietists and the fruitless agitation of those who rely on themselves and have no profound prayer.

On this subject St. Francis de Sales,[31] Bossuet,[32] Father Piny,[33] and Father de Caussade [34] may be read with profit. We have treated this question at greater length elsewhere;[35] here we shall give what is essential.

The act of pure love may be considered in three ways: (i) as an exceptional and very rare act; (2) as a continuous exercise; (3) as an ordinary act accessible to all Christians.

it is indeed distinct from charity, but is not contrary thereto, as when a man loves himself from the point of view of his own good, yet not so as to place his end in this his own good."

[30] *Suvnm,* la, q. 19, a. 11 f.

[31] *Treatise on the Love of God,* Bk. IX, chap. 4.

[32] *Discours sur l'acte d'abandon.*

[33] *Le plus parfait. L'Etat du pur amour.*

[34] *Abandonment to Divine Providence.*

[35] *Providence,* Part IV, pp. 215-87.

1. The exceptional and very rare act of pure love is a close and lofty union with God, found only in already purified souls which, under a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost and without any return on self, no longer actually and explicitly think of their own beatitude. It was in an act of this kind that St. Paul, *in excessu mentis,* desired to be deprived for a time of the joy of possessing God that, by this sacrifice, he might obtain the conversion of his brethren.[30]

2. The continual exercise of the act of pure love was proposed by the quietists as the state of perfection. In reality, this act exists with continuity only in heaven.

3. The ordinary act of pure love accessible to all Christians is the act of charity by which one loves God with appreciative love, above all, because He is infinitely good and better than all His gifts, while tending to love Him with intensive love, more than all, which will be realized in heaven.[87] This act corresponds to the supreme precept of love, a precept that makes it the duty of all to tend to perfect charity.[88]

[88] St. Thomas, Ila llae, q. 27, a.8 ad ium; and *Comm, in Ep. ad Rom.,* 9:3.

[81] The appreciative love of God above all else is a love of esteem which is already efficacious, that is, which orders our whole life to Him, but without excluding venial sin. The love by which we love God intensively, more than all else, is an intense impulse of sensible love, a transport of love which makes one anticipate the life of heaven.

[88] *Sunnna,* Ila llae, q. 24, a. 8; q. 184, a. 3.

CHAPTER XXX

The Degrees of Contemplative Prayer in Proficients

WE have seen the nature of contemplative prayer and the difference between the last acquired prayer and initial infused prayer. We shall now consider the various degrees of infused prayer in proficients. These degrees are set forth in the works of St. Teresa[1] and in those of St. Francis de Sales.[2] We shall give the essential part of their teaching and then apply this doctrine to fervent Communion.

The Progress of Prayer and the Virtues

The degrees of contemplative prayer are chiefly those of the growing intensity of living faith, of charity, and of the gifts of the Holy Ghost which correspond to them. This growing intensity of union with God manifests itself in a way by the progressive extension of this state to the different faculties of the soul, which are gradually captivated by God, so that little by little the distractions which come from an agitated and intractable imagination cease. Besides, and this point is especially important, the virtues grow as a rule with the progress of prayer.

St. Teresa[3] makes this truth clear by comparing the degrees of prayer to four ways of watering a garden. First, water may be drawn from a well by main force;[4] this is the figure of discursive meditation, which contributes to the growth of the virtues. The second way of watering consists in drawing up the water with a water-

[1] *The Interior Castle,* fourth and fifth mansions.
[2] *Treatise on the Love of God,* Bk. VI, chaps. 8-ia.
[3] Cf. *Life,* by herself, chaps. »5-19.
[4] *Ibid.,* chap. 11.

wheel, called a *noria;* this is the symbol of the prayer of quiet, which is prepared by work that disposes the soul to it. At this time the flowers of the virtues are about to appear.®

A third way of watering consists in irrigating the garden with running water from a river; the virtues draw far more vigor from this prayer than from the preceding one, and their flowers bloom.®

Lastly, the fourth water, which is rain, symbolizes the prayer of union given by God without human labor. "The soul draws from this prayer much more abundant fruits, its humility increases. It is here that are born heroic promises and resolutions, burning desires, horror of the world (of its spirit), the clear view of vanity." 7

Consequently Pius X, in his letter (March 7, 1914) on St. Teresa's doctrine, says: "The degrees of prayer enumerated by her are so many superior ascents toward the summit of Christian perfection." 8

St. John of the Cross speaks in similar terms. He shows in particular that in the night of the senses, or passive purification of the sensibility, there is in the midst of aridity an initial infused contemplation, accompanied by an ardent desire for God.8 It is an arid quiet, often spoken of by St. Jane de Chantal, which prepares the soul for the consoled quiet described by St. Teresa in the fourth mansion.

The Prayer of Quiet

In sweet quiet, which corresponds to the second way of watering, that is, with the pump, "the will alone is captivated" 10 by the living fight that manifests the sweet presence of God in us and His goodness. At this moment the gift of piety, which is in the will itself, disposes it to an entirely filial affection toward God. This state has been compared to that of a little child who relishes the milk given it. Or better, it is like the springing up of the living water which Jesus spoke of to the Samaritan woman. "The other fountain . . . receives the water from the source itself, which signifies God. . . .

" *ibid.,* chaps. 14 f.
e *Ibid.,* chaps. 16 f.
7 *Ibid.,* chaps. 18 f.
' "Docet enim gradus orationis quot numerantur, veluti totidem superiores in Christiana perfectione ascensus esse."
8 *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. 9.
10 *The Way of Perfection,* chap. 31.

We experience the greatest peace, calm, and sweetness in the inmost depths of our being. . . . The whole physical part of our nature shares in this delight and sweetness. . . . They [the celestial waters] appear to dilate and enlarge us internally, and benefit us in an inexplicable manner, nor does even the soul itself understand what it receives." [11]

However, in this state, the intellect, the memory, and the imagination are not yet captivated by the divine action. Sometimes they are the auxiliaries of the will and are occupied in its service; at other times their cooperation serves only to trouble it. Then, says St. Teresa, the will should "take no more notice of the understanding (or imagination) than it would of an idiot." [12]

This sweet quiet, called also the prayer of divine tastes or of silence, is, moreover, often interrupted by the aridities and trials of the night of the senses,[18] by temptations which oblige the soul to a salutary reaction. The effects of the prayer of quiet are greater virtue, especially greater love of God and ineffable peace, at least in the higher part of the soul.[14]

The prayer of quiet described by St. Teresa in the fourth mansion has three distinct phases: (1) passive recollection, which is a sweet and loving absorption of the will in God by a special grace; (2) quiet, properly so called, in which the will is captivated by God, whether it remains silent or prays with a sort of spiritual transport; (3) the sleep of the powers, when, the will remaining captive, the understanding ceases to discourse and is itself seized by God, although the imagination and the memory continue to be disturbed.[18]

The conduct to be observed in the prayer of quiet is that of humble abandonment in the hands of God. No effort should be made to place oneself in this state, which can come only from a special grace of the Holy Ghost, who at times inclines the soul to a loving silence, at others to affections which gush forth as from a spring. If the understanding and imagination wander, the soul must not be disturbed about it, or go in search of them; the will should remain and

[11] *The Interior Castle,* fourth mansion, chap. 2.
[12] *The Way of Perfection,* chap. 31; *The Interior Castle,* fourth mansion, chap. 1.
[18] *The Way of Perfection,* chaps. 34, 38; *The Interior Castle, loc. cit.*
[14] *Life,* by herself, chap. 15.
[*] *ibid.,* chap. 17.

enjoy the favor it receives, like a wise bee in the depths of its retreat.[1*]

The Prayer of Simple Union

If the soul is faithful not only in attentively accomplishing all its daily duties, but in listening with docility to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, who becomes more exacting in proportion as He gives more, what happens as a rule? The soul is then raised to a higher degree, called "simple union." The action of God at this time becomes strong enough to absorb completely the interior faculties of the soul; God is the object of all its activity, which no longer wanders abroad. Not only the will is captivated by God, but also the thoughts and the memory; in addition, the soul has, as it were, the certitude of the divine presence. The imagination is no longer restless, but calmed; at times it is as if asleep, in order to allow the higher faculties of the intellect and will to be united to God. The special grace given by the Holy Ghost is then like running water coming from a river.

It even happens that all the soul's activity occurs in its higher part, to such an extent that there is suspension of the exercise of the exterior senses, that is, a beginning of ecstasy, or ecstasy properly so called. If the mathematician who is absorbed in his research no longer hears what is said to him, with even greater reason is this true of him who is thus strongly drawn by God.

The soul then receives the salutary water that refreshes and purifies it like rain falling from heaven. According to St. Teresa, God "will leave us no share in them [His wondrous works] except complete conformity of our wills to His." [17] "How beautiful is the soul after having been immersed in God's grandeur and united closely to Him for but a short time! Indeed, I do not think it is ever as long as half an hour." [18]

St. Teresa points out also that the prayer of union is quite often incomplete, without suspension of the imagination and the memory, which sometimes wage a veritable war on the intellect.[19] It is of this incomplete mystical union that St. Teresa is speaking in *The In-*

[18] Cf. St. Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God,* Bk. VI, chap. io.
[17] *The Interior Castle,* fifth mansion, chap. i.
[18] *Ibid.,* chap. *i.*
[19] *Life,* chap. 17.

terior Castle when she says: "Is it necessary, in order to attain to this kind of divine union, for the powers of the soul to be suspended? No; God has many ways of enriching the soul and bringing it to these mansions besides what might be called a 'short cut.' " 20

The effects of the prayer of union are most sanctifying; there is something like a transformation of the soul similar to the metamorphosis of the silkworm into a butterfly. The soul feels great contrition for its sins; it experiences an ardent zeal to make God known and loved and to serve Him, suffers greatly at the sight of the loss of sinners, glimpses what the sufferings of our Lord must have been. Then the heroic practice of the virtues really begins, especially perfect submission to the will of God and great love for one's neighbor.21 The martyrs have at times had this prayer in the midst of their torments.22

These prayers of sweet quiet and of simple union correspond to those which, in the opinion of St. John of the Cross, are found between the passive purification of the senses and that of the spirit.23 St. Teresa, in the first chapter of the sixth mansion, speaks clearly of the purification of the spirit, as we shall see later on when we treat of arid union and of ecstatic union which precede the transforming union.24

20 Fifth mansion, chap. 3. This short cut and the delights found in it are not infused contemplation (which may be arid); it is only the suspension of the imagination and the memory or a beginning of ecstasy, which sometimes accompanies mystical union and greatly facilitates it. Cf. J. Arintero, O.P., *Evolucion mistica,* 2nd ed., p. 667, and *Cuestiones misticas,* 2nd ed., p. 330. Cf. also A. Saudreau, *Degrés de la vie spirituelle,* 5th ed., Il, 101, no. 2. The short cut is thus the absence of distractions and fatigue, and an abundance of very sensible joy.

21 *The Interior Castle,* fifth mansion, chap. 2.

22 In *Lettres de Rome sur l'athéisme moderne* (June, 1936, pp. 125 ff.), there was a letter from Spain, dated May 7, 1936, which was written by a young Christian girl who was soundly thrashed as the result of a calumny uttered against her by the Communists. She writes: "How the Lord gives necessary strength to those who pray! I, who am so cowardly, saw death near with a peace which I should never have imagined possible in myself. In spite of the nervous tension of two hours of anguish, I did not lose my serenity, since I was sure of going to heaven immediately after death which awaited us."

2,*The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chap. 1; *A Spiritual Canticle,* st. 26. There is generally a period of calm between the night of the senses (which corresponds to the beginning of the fourth mansion of St. Teresa) and the night of the spirit (which is indicated in the sixth mansion).

•'Cf. *infra,* chap. ji.

Contemplative Prayer and Fervent Communion

Contemplative prayer, which we have just discussed, enables us to glimpse the depths of the Sacrifice of the Mass and of Communion, in which the Word of God made flesh gives Himself to us to be the food of our souls and to incorporate us more intimately in Himself, while quickening us.

St. Thomas Aquinas must have had a high degree of contemplative prayer when he composed the Office and the Mass for the feast of Corpus Christi. We shall note here some of its principal parts.

In Vespers, the responsory recalls the parable of the guests. Several, preoccupied with their own affairs or pleasures, declined to come; then the Lord invited the poor and at the Holy Table gave Himself to them as food. This is the loftiest interpretation of the parable of the guests.[25]

In the antiphon of the Magnificat at First Vespers, we read: "How sweet is Thy spirit, O Lord, who, to show Thy tenderness to Thy children, hast given them a most sweet bread from heaven; Thou dost fill the hungry with good things and sendest the rich, who have not this hunger, away empty."

The Introit of the Mass recalls the words of the Psalmist: "He fed them with the fat of wheat"; [25] this wheat is Himself, for the bread has been changed into the substance of His body, which suffered for us on the cross. When we receive it, there is a spiritual and vivifying contact, which should daily become more intimate, between our poor soul and the holy soul of the Word made flesh, for He Himself said: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me, and I in him." [27]

Contemplation rises with sequence:

Lauda, Sion, Salvatorem,
lauda ducem et pastorem,
in hymnis et canticis.

Sion, lift thy voice, and sing,
Praise thy Savior and thy King,
Praise with hymns thy Shepherd true;

Quantum potes, tantum aude,
quia major omni laude,
nec laudare sufficis.

Strive thy best to praise Him well;
Yet doth He all praise excel;
None can ever reach His due.

[25] Matt. 22:1-14.
[25] Ps. 80:17.
[27] John 6:57.

The end of the sequence shows us in Communion the prelude of the life of heaven:

Tu, qui cuncta scis et vales,	Thou, who feedest us below!
qui nos pascis hic mortales:	Source of all we have or know!
tuos ibi commensales,	Grant that with Thy saints above,
Coheredes et sodales,	Sitting at the feast of love,
fac sanctorum civium.	We may see Thee face to face.
Amen, Alleluia.	Amen. Alleluia.

In our pilgrimage toward eternity, we are nourished by the Eucharist, like the prophet Elias who, when obliged to walk even to Mount Horeb, was sustained by a loaf of bread brought to him by an angel.[28]

The hymn for Matins of this feast of the Blessed Sacrament ends in the contemplation of infinite riches inclining toward extreme poverty:

Panis angelicus fit panis hominum;	The bread of angels becomes the bread of men.
Dat panis coelicus figuris terminum.	The bread of heaven puts an end to figures.
O res mirabilis! manducat Dominum	O wonderful truth! Man, the poor, the slave, the humble,
Pauper, servus et humilis!	Eats his Lord.

It is the saving Host which draws infinite Mercy down upon us:

O salutaris Hostia,	O saving Victim,
Quae coeli pandis ostium:	Opening wide the gates of heaven:
Bella premunt hostilia,	Our foes press on,
Da robur, fer auxilium.	Give us strength, bring us help.

We receive this help especially during severe trials or persecutions, when faced with the enemy's attacks. At such times we more particularly need to live by penetrating and living faith and by the contemplation of the Eucharistic mystery, and to convince ourselves in fervent Communion of the fact that God alone is great, that He alone is of Himself, that the strongest and most formidable creatures are as nothing in comparison with Him and can do no

[28] Cf. III Kings 19:6.

harm without His permission. Not a hair of our heads will perish unless He has willed or permitted it, says the Gospel.[29] We must convince ourselves in the living light of contemplation that when we say, "God permits evil only for a higher good," we are uttering not simply a sacred formula, but a truth replete with life. We must firmly and deeply believe that the higher good which God is beginning to realize in us in the midst of our struggles is an eternal good that will not pass away. We need to believe that profound Christian life is eternal life begun. We must nourish ourselves with these divine truths and, better still, we must nourish ourselves with Christ Himself who is divine subsistent Truth. We need to be vivified by Him, defended by Him, and to receive from Him that living flame of charity which will make us always aspire higher, even to the end of our journey. Such are in every faithful interior soul the fruits of mental prayer and fervent Communion.

What the great spiritual writers tell us about contemplative prayer is within the reach of the interior soul if it is willing to follow the way of humility and abnegation, and if it daily grasps a little better the following verse of the Magnificat: "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble."

What the masters of the life of prayer tell us is not beyond attainment by the faithful soul which believes with lively faith that in baptism it received the seed of eternal life, and which feels the need of being daily more deeply penetrated by the infinite value of the Mass. Then the soul understands how important it is to receive from God all that, in His infinite mercy, He wishes to give souls that He may draw them to Himself and make them share eternally in His inner life, in His eternal beatitude, as the prologue of St. John's Gospel, read daily at Mass, reminds us: "But as many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God." Those who are "born of God," and not only of the flesh and of the will of man, should five especially by the divine life which, once begun in us, ought not to end. This is why Christ Himself says to us: "If any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink. . . . Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water,"[30] "a fountain of water, springing up into life everlasting."[31]

[28] Luke 21:18.
[29] "John 7:37 f.
[31] John 4:14.

CHAPTER XXXI

Questions Relative to Infused Contemplation

SINCE we have discussed docility to the Holy Ghost, the mysticism of *The Imitation,* which is accessible to all, contemplative prayer in its beginnings and its degrees in proficients, we are prepared to examine the principal problem confronting us today about infused contemplation and to see the points on which there is agreement among many theologians who follow at the same time the principles formulated by St. Thomas and the doctrine of St. John of the Cross.

The Principal Problem

The principal question we are going to examine bears on the intimate nature of infused contemplation. There is agreement in saying that contemplation in general, such as may exist in a philosopher, for example, in Plato and Aristotle, is a simple, intellectual view of the truth, superior to reasoning, as St. Thomas explains.[2]

An example of this contemplation is the knowledge that at the summit of changing beings there exists being itself, absolutely simple and immutable, principle and end of all things; it is wisdom itself, goodness, and love. All the proofs for the existence of God converge toward this culminating point, and reason by its powers alone, with the natural help of God, can rise to this philosophical contemplation.

But when it is a question of Christian contemplation based on divine revelation received through faith, what do the great spiritual

[1] Cf. *supra,* chaps, II, 27, 28, 29.
[2] *Summa,* IIa IIae, q. 180, a.3, 0.

writers understand by the word "contemplation," especially when they distinguish it from "meditation"? Does Christian meditation also bear on the truths of faith and what flows from them? How does contemplation differ from it?

The great spiritual writers, who are authoritative in the matter, agree in saying with St. John of the Cross: "Contemplation is the science of love, which is an infused loving knowledge of God," [5] a knowledge that is not always absorbing, that is sometimes accompanied by distractions, and that may exist with the aridity of the passive purifications, or nights of the senses and spirit.

We have shown elsewhere[4] that St. Teresa,[6] St. Francis de Sales,[®] and St. Jane de Chantal[7] agree perfectly on this point with St. John of the Cross when they indicate the differences between discursive and affective meditation which becomes increasingly simple and contemplation properly so called. They also agree in stating, in opposition to the quietists, that one must not leave meditation before receiving this infused and loving knowledge of God, for in so doing there would result "more harm than good," as St. Teresa points out.[8]

Since such is indeed the meaning of the word "contemplation" in the writings of the great spiritual authors, what must be understood by "acquired contemplation," spoken of by a number of authors, especially since the seventeenth century? Is acquired contemplation, with the union with God which results from it, the summit of the normal development of the interior life, or is it in reality only a disposition to receive the grace of the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith, which would consequently be in the normal way of sanctity and clearly distinguished from essentially extraor-

[5] *The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chap. 18, par. 5.

[4] *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* pp. 221-35.

[6] *The Interior Castle,* fourth mansion, chap. 3: Description of the prayer of passive recollection in which infused contemplation begins, and which precedes that of quiet in which the will is captivated by God, in spite of involuntary distractions.

[5] *Treatise on the Love of God,* chaps. 3-7: Differences between meditation and contemplation, which is more simple, more loving, which is truly the fruit of love, "the end and the goal toward which all spiritual exercises tend" *(ibid.,* chap. 6).

[7] *Œuvres complètes* (Paris, 1876), II, 268, opuscule on *L'Oraison de quiétude,* and *Réponses de sainte Chantal* (2nd ed.; Paris, 1665), p. 508.

[8] *The Interior Castle,* fourth mansion, chap. 3.

dinary graces like revelations, visions, the stigmata, and so on? In substance this is the chief problem confronting us on this subject. To solve it, we must examine more closely the definitions that are generally admitted.

Accepted Definitions

Contemplation in general, we have said, is a simple, intellectual view of the truth, above reasoning and accompanied by admiration.

Acquired contemplation is generally defined by those who admit its existence at the end of meditation as a simple and loving knowledge of God and of His works, which is the fruit of our personal activity aided by grace. It is commonly agreed that the theologian possesses the contemplation called "acquired" at the end of his research in the synthetic view which he reaches. This is also the case with the preacher who sees his whole sermon in one central thought, and in the faithful who listen attentively to this sermon, admire its unity and, as a result, taste the great truth of faith which they see in its radiation.

In these cases there is a certain contemplation that proceeds from faith united to charity and from a more or less latent influence of the gifts of understanding, wisdom, and knowledge. But this admiring knowledge would not exist if, for lack of a higher inspiration, the human activity of the preacher had not carefully arranged the ideas in such a way as to bring out their harmony. A poorly prepared sermon would, in fact, produce the contrary result.

In the believer who himself meditates on a great truth of faith, does the knowledge, which has often since the seventeenth century been called "acquired contemplation," differ from simplified affective meditation? In agreement with the testimony of the great spiritual writers quoted at the beginning of this chapter, especially of St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa, and St. Francis de Sales, we do not think so. It seems certain that, if their teaching is accepted, what has often been described under the name of acquired contemplation is only a variety of affective prayer, in which the soul that has not yet received the grace of loving infused knowledge, may, nevertheless, dwell for brief moments with a simple, admiring gaze on the merciful goodness of God, the interventions of Providence, the infinite value of our Savior's merits. Subsequently the soul returns to considerations and affections.

What has been called "acquired contemplation" thus corresponds to the acquired prayer of recollection, described by St. Teresa in *The Way of Perfection,*[0] a prayer that is entirely different from the "supernatural and passive recollection" of which she speaks in chapter three of the fourth mansion, where infused contemplation begins. St. John of the Cross speaks in like manner in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* where he deals with the passage from meditation to the state where "God now communicates Himself to the soul, thus passive, as the light of the sun to him whose eyes are open." [10]

In contradistinction to acquired prayer, infused contemplation is generally defined as a simple and loving knowledge of God and His works, which is the fruit, not of human activity aided by grace, but of a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost. For example, in a poorly organized, lifeless sermon, which produces scarcely anything but weariness in most of the listeners, the preacher may, however, quote a saying of our Lord which profoundly seizes a soul, captivates it, and absorbs it. In this case there is in that soul a manifest act of infused contemplation, because it is not in human power to produce this act at will like an ordinary act of faith. Here it is a question of a particular, penetrating, and often even sweet act of faith in which an experienced director quickly perceives an influence of the gifts of understanding and wisdom.

But, although such an act is not in our power, we can dispose ourselves by humility, prayer, and recollection, to receive the divine inspiration which produces it, and we can also follow this inspiration with docility. According to St. Thomas, a special operating grace leads us to act above discursive deliberation, whereas cooperating grace inclines us to act at the end of this deliberation.[11]

Thus the act of infused love is free and meritorious because of the docility to the Holy Ghost which it contains, although it is not properly speaking deliberate, in the sense that it is not the fruit of a reasoned deliberation but of a superior inspiration.

This essentially infused contemplation and the infused love that accompanies it begin with what St. Teresa calls the prayer of passive recollection,[12] and what St. John of the Cross calls the passive night

• Chap. 28.

10 Bk. II, chap. 15.

11 Summa, la Ilae, q. 111, a.2: On operating and cooperating grace. Cf. Vol. I, pp. 90-93.

12 The Interior Castle, fourth mansion, chap. 3.

of the senses; in other words, at the beginning of the mystical life, properly so called. Whence it follows that essentially mystical contemplation is that which, in the eyes of an experienced director and in the sense we have just indicated, is manifestly passive. If this infused contemplation lasts and becomes frequent, one has the mystical state.

We believe, therefore, that we may draw the same conclusion in regard to so-called acquired contemplation as we did in a previous work: [13] If by acquired contemplation we mean a prayer distinct from simplified affective prayer, in which the intellect is totally absorbed by its object and in which we place ourselves by the suppression of all rational activity, we thereby not only create a degree of prayer unknown to St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, but we likewise oppose their explicit teaching. In fact, St. Teresa repeatedly opposes the total suppression of discourse and the movement of thought as long as one has not received infused contemplation.[14]

Therefore the majority of theologians who, like those of Carmel, while wishing to remain faithful to the teaching of St. John of the Cross and of St. Teresa, have spoken of acquired contemplation, understand by it what St. Teresa calls "the acquired prayer of recollection" [15] in which our intellectual activity is simplified, but not suppressed. These theologians call this prayer contemplation because the act of simple intellectual intuition is frequent in it, and discursive meditation, on the other hand, is reduced. Consequently the substance of the difficulty disappears, and the question becomes one of terminology.[13]

Moreover, the Carmelite theologians who have admitted the existence of acquired contemplation have rightly refused to consider it the normal term of spiritual progress on earth. They hold that in generous souls truly docile to the Holy Ghost, it is a proximate disposition to receive infused contemplation normally.[11]

[»] *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* pp. 225 ff.

[‘‘] Life, chap. 12; *The Interior Castle,* fourth mansion, chap. 3. St. John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. II, chap. 15.

[lll] *The Way of Perfection,* chap. 28.

[‘‘] Cf. lather Gabriel of St. Magdalen, C.D., "Note sur la contemplation acquise d'après les théologiens du Carmel depuis le XVIIe siècle," *La Vie spirituelle,* September, 1923, supplement; reproduced in *Perfection chrétienne et contemplation,* II, 745-69.

[’’] This is the teaching of Thomas of Jesus, *De contemplatione,* Bk. I, chaps. 7 f.; Bk. II, chap. 5; of Philip of the Blessed Trinity, *Summa theol. myst.* (ed.

Different opinions have arisen about the time when infused contemplation begins. Attentive reading of the third chapter of St. Teresa's fourth mansion, however, seems to indicate clearly that contemplation begins with the prayer of "supernatural recollection," which we cannot obtain for ourselves by our own activity, aided by grace. According to the terminology employed by St. John of the Cross, contemplation begins with the passive night of the senses.[18]

The terminology may thus be fixed by the meaning which the great spiritual writers have given to the unqualified term "contemplation"; when they juxtapose it to meditation, they are speaking of infused contemplation which begins in the aridity of the night of the senses.[19] For this reason St. John of the Cross, as we said at the beginning of this chapter, defined contemplation as "an infused loving knowledge of God." [20]

Intimate Nature of Infused Contemplation

According to the masters whom we have just quoted, contemplation properly so called, or infused, is therefore a loving knowledge of God which comes from a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost to make us advance continually in the love of God. Not only does it proceed from the infused virtues, in particular from faith united to charity, but it is an infused act of knowledge accompanied by infused love, which we could not make by ourselves with the help of common actual grace. In certain souls it is love which dominates; in others, light.

This special inspiration of the Holy Ghost is, therefore, the principle of infused contemplation. We receive this inspiration with docility through the gifts of the Holy Ghost, especially through those

1874), II, 299; III, 43; of Anthony of the Holy Ghost, *Directorium mysticum* (ed. 1733), tr. III, d. III, sect. IV; tr. IV, d. I, sect. VI; of Joseph of the Holy Ghost, *Cursus theol. mystico-scol.,* disp. XI, q.2, nos. 18, 23; and of the Dominican Vallgornera, *Theol. myst. S. Thomae,* q. 3, d.3, a. 3.

18 Cf. *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. 14; cf. also chap. 8.

19 At the end of his study on Molinos, *Le Quiétisme espagnol, Michel de Molinos* (1921, p. 260), Father Dudon, S.J., concludes as follows: "There is no contemplation worthy of this name except passive contemplation." On the contrary, Molinos admitted a contemplation acquired by the suppression of our activity; it became somnolence.

20 *The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chap. 18.

of understanding and wisdom, which are, as a result, in the just soul like sails which enable a vessel to receive as it should the impulsion of a favorable breeze.[21]

St. John of the Cross himself links infused contemplation to the gifts of the Holy Ghost when he writes in *The Dark Night:* "This dark contemplation is called secret, because it is, as I have said before, the mystical theology which theologians call secret wisdom, and which, according to St. Thomas, is infused into the soul more especially by love. This happens in a secret, hidden way in which the natural operations of the understanding and the other faculties have no share. And, therefore, because the faculties of the soul cannot compass it, it being the Holy Ghost who infuses it into the soul, in a way it knoweth not, as the Bride saith in the *Canticle,* we call it secret." [22] Under this higher inspiration, living faith thus becomes increasingly penetrating and sweet.

Therefore, between infused contemplation and meditation, even when simplified, there is a difference not only of degree, but of nature. Meditation, in fact, is in our power; it proceeds from our personal activity aided by common actual grace and, if there is in it a latent influence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, this influence is not what constitutes it. Analogically, when the work of the rowers is facilitated by a favorable breeze, it is not the breeze which is the principle of the toil.

Infused contemplation, on the contrary, is not in our power; it proceeds not from our activity aided by grace, but from the more or less manifest special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which is indispensable here. Therefore, in this case, the difference is not one of degree, but of nature, for the special inspiration is not only a stronger actual grace; it is not only moving but regulating; it contains a superior rule. Similarly, there is a specific difference between even the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost: the infused virtues are by themselves principles of acts which we can produce at will, whereas the gifts dispose us to receive with docility the impulsion of the Holy Ghost for acts whose superhuman mode, springing from a superior rule, specifically surpasses our activity aided by common grace. As St. Thomas shows,[23] there is in this case a specific

[21] *Summa,* la Ilae, q.68, a. 1.
[22] Bk. II, chap. 17.
[23] *Suvnna,* la Ilac, q.68, a. 1.

difference, just as there is more than a difference of degree between the work of the oars that makes a boat advance and the impulsion of a favorable wind that makes rowing unnecessary.[24]

In the ascetical life, before the passive purification of the senses, in which infused contemplation begins, the gifts of the Holy Ghost still intervene only weakly, and often they are as if bound by some attachment to venial sin,[25] like sails which have not yet been spread. Later, in the mystical life, the intellectual gifts of understanding and wisdom, which are both speculative and practical,[20] appear in some under a clearly contemplative form and in others, as in St. Vincent de Paul, under a form more directed toward action.

Lastly, it should be noted that the act of infused contemplation proceeds from living faith as from its radical principle, and from the gift of wisdom or that of understanding as from its proximate principle actualized by the divine inspiration. It is an act of penetrating and sweet faith; the superior inspiration received through the gifts adds to this act of faith the precious modalities of penetration and sweetness, which increase with the touch of the Holy Ghost to the point of becoming a taste of eternal life. Here we find, therefore, in a subordinated manner the formal motive of infused faith (the authority of God revealing), that of charity (the divine goodness sovereignly lovable for its own sake), and that of the gifts mentioned (the illumination of the Holy Ghost, which is regulating and inspiring). Consequently this simple act of penetrating and sweet faith deserves to be called infused in order to distinguish it from the act of faith which we commonly make at will, without special inspiration, for example, in order to say the prayers that we recite daily.

What is meant by the direct acts of contemplation? They are

** Father de Guibert, S.J., in his *Theologia spiritualis ascetica et mystica* (1937, p. 344), says on the subject of the specific distinction between infused contemplation and the acquired prayers: "Quae speciei diversitas a non paucis prorsus negatur, ut v.g. a P. Garrigou-Lagrange." We, on the contrary, have always admitted with St. Thomas and his disciples a specific difference between the infused virtues and the gifts, and consequently between the act of the virtues which proceeds *ex industria propria* (even with the latent help of the gifts) and the characteristic act of the gifts, which proceeds from a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

'' Cf. Louis Lallemant, S.J., *La Doctrine spirituelle,* 4th Principle, chap. 3, a.3.

TM *Summa,* Ila Ilae, q.8, a.3; q.4j, a.3.

acts which are in no way discursive, but which are made by a simple gaze, above reasoning. And indeed they are at times so peaceful that the soul does not, so to speak, perceive them; in that case they are the contrary of reflective or perceived acts. With this meaning, according to Cassian,[27] St. Anthony said: "There is no perfect prayer if the solitary perceives that he is praying." This is the learned ignorance of which the mystics often speak. The direct acts of true contemplation do not indicate a dangerous idleness, but, on the contrary, a most intimate knowledge of divine truth. And if, after such prayer, the soul is humble, peaceful, detached, and zealous for the practice of the virtues, this result is a sign that it has not lost its time in prayer. These direct acts of contemplation are free, although they are not the fruit of discursive deliberation.

The Progress of Infused Contemplation

We have pointed out that, to show the growing intensity of contemplation and union with God, St. Teresa insists on the progressive extension of the mystical state to the different faculties, which gradually are either suspended or captivated by God. First of all, the will alone is seized and held (in the prayer of quiet), then the intellect (in more or less complete simple union); next the imagination falls asleep, so to speak; lastly, in total or partial ecstasy, the exercise of the exterior senses is suspended because all the activity of the soul is drawn toward God. St. Teresa knows, however, that the suspension of the imagination and of the senses is only a concomitant and accidental phenomenon of infused contemplation,[28] since, she says, ecstasy generally ceases in the most perfect mystical state, the transforming union.[28] The mystical state, complete in regard to its extension, is not therefore necessarily the most intense or the most elevated. St. Teresa is well aware of this fact; but this extension, which is at first progressive, then restricted, is easy to determine and describe. It constitutes a sign which may be useful,

[27] Coll., IX, 31.

[28] *The Interior Castle,* fifth mansion, chap. 1: The saint speaks here of certain unusual particularities which are found in this fifth mansion and which are the portion of the small number of souls that are in it. Likewise, cf. fifth mansion, chap. 3, apropos of "the short cut." Cf. *supra,* the preceding chapter for notes relative to simple union.

[29] *The Interior Castle,* seventh mansion, chap. 3.

on condition that it be joined to another more profound sign on which St. John of the Cross insists.

This more profound sign refers directly to the progress of contemplation in penetration and to the intimacy of divine union. It is found, first of all, in the passive purification of the senses, then in that of the spirit, both of which denote great progress in the intensity of the knowledge and love of God and of the other virtues. St. Teresa did not indeed neglect this second sign; she speaks of it in connection with the aridities that contemplatives undergo, especially of the great aridity that is found at the beginning of the sixth mansion, and that corresponds to the night of the spirit. She also speaks of it in connection with the different ways of watering a garden: 80 water drawn from the well by hand is the figure of meditation; the water-wheel, called a *noria,* is the symbol of the prayer of quiet; irrigation by canals, which fertilizes the garden, represents the sleep of the powers; finally, rain symbolizes the prayer of union. Thus progressively the flowers of the virtues bloom and form the fruits: "This is the time of resolutions, of heroic determinations, of the living energy of good desires, of the beginning of hatred of the world, and of the most clear perception of its vanity." 81

Infused contemplation begins therefore, as St. John of the Cross says,82 with the passive purification of the senses, which is a second conversion in arid quiet; it progresses then, accompanied by the consolations of the illuminative way. Contemplation becomes much more penetrating in the night of the spirit, in the midst of great spiritual aridity and of strong temptations against the theological virtues. In this period these virtues and humility are purified of all alloy and become truly heroic.83 The soul is thus prepared for the transforming union which St. John of the Cross speaks of in *The Living Flame of Love* and St. Teresa in the seventh mansion. The transforming union is the culminating point of infused contemplation on earth and, in souls that reach the full perfection of Christian life, it is the normal prelude of eternal life.

,0 *Life,* chaps, n, 14, 15, 16, 18.
el Life, chap. 19, fourth water.
•2 *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. 14.
* *Ibid.,* Bk. II, chaps. 12-21.

What Infused Contemplation Does Not Necessarily Require

Several important observations arise from the facts we have just presented.

1. The degrees of contemplation described by St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa, show that contemplation does not always imply joy, that it begins ordinarily in the aridity of the sensibility, as it may subsist in great aridity of the spirit. Moreover, it is not necessarily accompanied by an absolute impossibility to discourse or to reason. Undoubtedly contemplation is superior to discourse, but precisely for this reason contemplation may inspire it from above, for example, in a preacher whose sermon would spring from the plenitude of the infused contemplation of the mysteries of Christ, like St. Peter's sermons on Pentecost and the pages which St. Augustine certainly wrote under a superior inspiration.

2. It follows also from what precedes that the mystical state gives at times the feeling of the presence of God (it is the quasi-experimental knowledge springing from the gift of wisdom); at others a great thirst for God, with intense suffering because of inability to enjoy Him and a lively feeling of moral and spiritual separation from Him (this is what happens especially in the night of the spirit, when the penetration of the gift of understanding makes itself felt more than the sweetness of the gift of wisdom).

In this last state there is, besides, an infused knowledge and an infused love, from which comes sharp suffering because God is not loved as He should be. This lively suffering and great thirst for God cannot, moreover, exist without a profound influence of His grace in us. Consequently there is a painful presence of God.

3. In addition, from what we have just said it is clear that infused contemplation does not require infused ideas like those of the angels,[34] but only an infused light: the special illumination of the gifts of understanding and wisdom, which is clearly distinguished from graces *gratis datae* like prophecy, the gift of the discerning of spirits, or that of tongues, graces bestowed especially for the benefit of one's neighbor.[85]

[34] We showed this at length in *Perfection chrétienne et contemplation,* II, appen., pp.

[85] *Summa,* Ia IIae, q. 111, a. 5.

4. Lastly, the description of the degrees of infused contemplation given by St. John of the Cross shows that it is not an immediate perception of God as He is in Himself; such a perception is proper only to the beatific vision.[88] When there is a marked influence of the gift of wisdom, God is known without reasoning as present in us in His effects *(medium in quo),* especially in the filial affection for Himself which He inspires in us, and in the sweetness of love which He sometimes makes a soul that is closely united to Him experience. This is the teaching of St. Thomas in his commentary on verse sixteen of chapter eight of the Epistle to the Romans when he discusses the words, "The Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God." [87] It is impossible to admit here an immediate intuition of sanctifying grace itself.[38]

5. Therefore the mystical life is characterized by the predominance (become both frequent and manifest for an experienced director) of the superhuman mode of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, especially of the gift of wisdom, which illumines the others. However, in the passive night of the senses the gift of knowledge predominates, showing the vanity of created things; in the night of the spirit the soul experiences chiefly the deep penetration of the gift

[88] *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* pp. 264-71. See also St. Teresa, *Life,* chap. 27.

[37] See also *Summa,* IIa IIae, q.97, a. 2 ad 211m.

[88] In his *Theologia spiritualis* (p. 353), Father de Guibert maintains that infused contemplation implies essentially a direct and immediate intuition of the supernatural gifts which unite us to God. We do not think so. Either, in fact, this intuition is immediate, or it is mediate by the effects of grace in us.

If there is immediate intuition of the supernatural gifts of grace and of the infused virtues, it is an extraordinary favor, as when Blessed Angela of Foligno saw her soul, or as when certain contemplatives are placed in a state similar to that of the separated soul, which knows itself immediately. And then this extraordinary favor, which seems to require an infused idea, is not necessary to infused contemplation, properly so called, for infused contemplation endures in the passive night of the spirit, in which the soul has by no means this immediate intuition of grace in itself, since it feels separated from God and suffers greatly as a result. If there is only mediate intuition through the effects of grace in us, then this does not exceed the act of the gift of wisdom as the Thomists have always understood it, as we have just said.

Finally, St. John of the Cross, in defining contemplation as "an infused, loving knowledge of God" *(The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chap. 18), does not speak of immediate intuition of the supernatural gifts of grace and of the infused virtues, an intuition which, moreover, would give us absolute certitude of the state of grace even before reaching the transforming union.

of understanding, but without experiencing the sweetness of the gift of wisdom. This gift appears in its full development and its greatest influence in the transforming union. The mystical state in general must not be confounded with its consoling phases, or with its complete flowering; it often exists under the form of arid quiet, which St. Jane de Chantal experienced for so long a time.[39]

The Call to Contemplation

The call to contemplation may be understood in different ways. When the question is raised whether all interior souls are called to infused contemplation, the call in question is general and remote, distinct from the individual and proximate call. The latter call, moreover, may be only sufficient and followed by resistance or negligence, or it may be efficacious, and that in two ways: to lead souls actually either to the lower degrees or to the higher degrees of contemplation.[40] In this problem we are again confronted with the mystery of the efficacy of grace, which is understood in one way by Thomists and Augustinians, and in another by Molinists.

In response to the question whether all interior souls are called to contemplation in a general and remote manner, we believe that the reply must be in the affirmative according to the principles formulated by St. Thomas on the gifts of the Holy Ghost which are received by all the just, and by St. John of the Cross on the passive purifications necessary for full Christian perfection, toward which we should all tend.

Three principal reasons motivate this reply. They relate to the radical principle of the interior life, to its progress, and to its end.

i. The basic principle of the mystical life (characterized by infused contemplation) is the same as that of the common interior life:

'' It is understandable, however, that, in order to define the mystical state, some authors have considered chiefly what it is in its full development, with the experiential and often sweet knowledge of the presence of God in us. Anyone would fall into the opposite extreme if he talked about an active mystical life in which the gifts af action would no longer be directed by the intellectual gifts of wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and counsel. What must be said is that in certain mystics the intellectual gifts appear chiefly under a practical form, directed toward action, as in St. Vincent de Paul, whereas in others these same intellectual gifts are manifested under a clearly contemplative form, as in St. John of the Cross.

40 We treated this question at length in *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* pp. 337-95.

the grace of the virtues and the gifts. Now docility to the Holy Ghost, according to the superhuman mode of the gifts, should normally prevail with spiritual progress to remedy the always imperfect human mode of the virtues and of our personal activity aided by common grace. The mystical life, which is characterized by this docility and this superhuman mode of knowledge and of infused love, appears, therefore, normally first of all in the illuminative way, but especially in the unitive way. Consequently St. John of the Cross writes: "The soul began to set out on the way of the spirit, the way of proficients, which is also called the illuminative way, or the way of infused contemplation, wherein God Himself teaches and refreshes the soul without meditation or any active efforts that itself may deliberately make." 41 This text, as we have already pointed out, is one of the most important.

2. In the progress of the interior life, the purification of the soul, according to St. John of the Cross, who is the faithful echo of tradition, is not complete except by the passive purifications. These purifications belong to the mystical order, in the sense that infused contemplation begins with the passive purification of the senses, in which the illuminations of the gift of knowledge predominate, and rises with the night of the spirit, in which the gift of understanding assumes the principal role. The Holy Ghost thus purifies humility and the theological virtues from all alloy; He brings into powerful relief their essentially supernatural and uncreated formal motive: the first revealing Truth, Mercy and helpful Omnipotence, divine Goodness, sovereignly lovable for its own sake.42 These passive purifications of a mystical order are thus in the normal way of sanctity and dispense from purgatory those who undergo them generously;

41 *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. 14.

42 This point of doctrine does not permit us to accept what Father de Guibert says in his recent *Theologia spiritualis: "Possunt animae ad quemlibet sanctitatis gradum ascendere, quin hac via (contemplationis infusae) habituali modo incedant."* We believe that this proposition does not preserve the teaching of the great spiritual writers, notably of St. John of the Cross, on the subject of the passive purifications, properly so called, necessary to reach a high perfection. These passive purifications are, in fact, a characterized mystical state, especially that of the spirit, which corresponds to the beginning of St. Teresa's sixth mansion. Without these passive purifications and the infused contemplation which they imply, one could not reach the perfection of the transforming union. Such is manifestly the teaching of St. John of the Cross; to doubt it, one would have had to forget the most categorical affirmations which recur continually in his works.

they are a purgatory before death in which the soul merits and makes progress, whereas in the other purgatory the soul no longer merits.

3. The end of the interior life is the same as that of the mystical life: eternal life, or the beatific vision and the inamissible love resulting from it. But the mystical life disposes the soul more immediately to this last end and, in the perfect, is its prelude, as shown by the evangelical beatitudes, which are eminent acts of the virtues and the gifts. The mystical life, which is characterized by infused contemplation and infused love of the divine goodness, is thus seen to be in the normal way of sanctity.

The reasons we have adduced—the basic principle of the interior life, its progress by the necessary passive purifications, and the ultimate end to which it is ordained—all contribute to show, in short, that infused contemplation and the union with God resulting from it are, in the perfect, the normal prelude of the life of heaven.

The principles formulated by St. Thomas on the gifts of the Holy Ghost, received by all the just, and the doctrine of St. John of the Cross on the passive purifications thus lead us to admit the general and remote call of all interior souls to infused contemplation.[48]

*· In *Christian Perfection and Contemplation* (pp. 369-72), we quoted several texts from St. John of the Cross relative to this teaching: *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chaps. 1, 14; Bk. II, chap. 1; *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. II, chap. 13; Bk. ill, chap. 1; *The Living Flame,* st. Ill, v. 3. Cf. also St. Teresa: *The Way of Perfection,* chaps. 19, 20, 21, 23, 25, 29, 33; *The Interior Castle,* fifth mansion, chap. 1.

We need only recall here that St. John of the Cross says in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* (Bk. II, chap. 15): "The soul, when it shall have purified and emptied itself from all these intelligible forms and images, will then dwell in this pure and simple fight, transformed thereto in the state of perfection. This light is ever ready to be communicated to the soul, but does not flow in, because of the forms and veils of the creature which enfold and embarrass the soul."

But in *The Dark Night* (Bk. I, chap. 1), he adds: "Souls begin to enter the dark night . . . the state of contemplatives, that, having passed through it, they may arrive at the state of the perfect." Finally, full perfection is found only in the transforming union, in which "the soul is no longer molested, either by the devil, or the flesh, or the world, or the desires, seeing that here is fulfilled what is written in the Canticle: 'Winter is now past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared in our land' " *(A Spiritual Canticle of the Soul,* Part III, st. 22).

St. Teresa speaks in like terms to her daughters at the beginning of the fifth mansion, chap. 1: "All we who wear the holy habit of the Carmelites are called to prayer and contemplation. This was the object of our Order, to this

The reservations made here and there by St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, Tauler, and other masters, refer to the individual and proximate call.44 It is certain that all just souls are not called in an individual and proximate manner to infused contemplation.

The proof of this statement lies in the fact that the three principal signs of the proximate call are not in all the just, or even in all interior souls. St. John of the Cross points out these signs in *The Dark Night:* "(i) When we find no comfort in the things of God (known

lineage we belong. . . . How little do most of us care to prepare our souls, that our Lord may reveal this jewel to us . . . to gain which we should neglect no means, either small or great!" In *The Way of Perfection* (chap. 19), speaking of infused contemplation and of the living waters of prayer, St. Teresa enunciates this general principle, which she later develops in chapters 20, 21, 23, 25, 29, 33: "Remember, our Lord invited 'any man': He is truth itself. . . . If all had not been included, He would not have addressed everybody, nor would He have said: 'I will give you to drink.' . . . But as He said unconditionally: 'If any man thirst let him come to Me,' I feel sure that, unless they stop half-way, none will fail to drink of this living water."

** St. Teresa says in *The Way of Perfection* (chap. 20): "The last chapter (on the general call) seems to contradict what I said, when in order to console those who were not contemplatives I told them that God had made many ways of reaching Him, just as He has made 'many mansions.' I repeat that His Majesty, being God, knows our weakness and has provided for us." And, in fact, she maintains the principle of the general call, which she again explains: "His mercy is so great that He hinders no one from drinking of the fountain of life. . . . Indeed, He calls us loudly and publicly to do so ('Jesus stood and cried, saying: If any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink,' John 7:37). Then take my advice; do not loiter on the road, but struggle manfully until you perish in the attempt."

The restrictions made earlier (chap. 17) by St. Teresa did not, therefore, concern the remote general call, but the individual proximate call, which is generally heard only by very generous souls.

St. Catherine of Siena speaks in exactly the same terms in chapter 53 of her *Dialogue,* apropos of the same text of St. John: "If any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink." The same teaching is found in Blessed Henry Suso's *Book of Eternal Wisdom,* chap. 22.

With this same meaning we must understand the reservations made at times by St. John of the Cross, for example, when he says in *The Dark Night* (Bk. I, chap. 9): "God does not raise to perfect contemplation everyone that is tried in the way of the spirit, and He alone knoweth why." The saint explains his thought on the subject at greater length in *The Living Elame* (St. 2, v. 5), where he says: "It is because many souls refuse to bear ever so little dryness and mortification, instead of acting with full patience. Then God does not continue to purify them profoundly." In other words: "Many are called, but few chosen." His reservations bear not only on the general and remote call, but on the individual and proximate call, which many do not prepare themselves to hear.

by way of the senses), and none also in created things. . . . (2) The second test and condition of this purgation are that the memory dwells ordinarily upon God with a painful anxiety and carefulness; the soul thinks it is not serving God, but going backwards. . . . (3) The third sign . . . is inability to meditate and make reflections, and to excite the imagination, as before, notwithstanding all the efforts we may make; for God begins now to communicate Himself no longer through the channel of sense, as formerly . . . but in pure spirit, . . . and in the act of pure contemplation." [48]

Finally, the individual and proximate call may be sufficient but remain fruitless because of our negligence or, on the contrary, it is efficacious, and that in different ways: to lead us effectively either to the lower degrees of contemplation, or to the highest degrees. Consequently St. Teresa applies to this subject our Lord's words: "Many are called, but few chosen." [46]

Our discussion of the call to contemplation shows that all interior souls may legitimately desire infused contemplation, on condition that they remain humble and leave to the good pleasure of God the time when this grace shall be granted to them. Thus the farmer may legitimately desire and ask for rain that will render fruitful the earth he has sown, but he should also trust in Providence. If every prayer should be at once humble, trusting, and persevering, the same qualities should characterize that prayer by which we ask for the penetrating and sweet faith of which we have just spoken, that is, a more lively and profound knowledge of revealed mysteries, of the majesty of God, of His radiating goodness, His providence, an experiential knowledge of the redemptive Incarnation, of the Passion, of the humiliations of the Word made flesh, of the influence that He still exercises through the Eucharist, of the infinite value of the Mass, of the worth of a fervent Communion, of the value of time which leads us to eternity. Holy Scripture often repeats this prayer: for example, in the Book of Wisdom we read, as the Office for the feast of St. Teresa recalls: "Wherefore I wished, and understanding was given me: and I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me. And I preferred her before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her. . . .

[*] Bk. I, chap. 9.

[46] *The Interior Castle,* fifth mansion, chap. 1. St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. 9.

For all gold in comparison of her, is as a little sand, and silver in respect to her shall be counted as clay. I loved her above health and beauty, and chose to have her instead of light: for her light cannot be put out. Now all good things came to me together with her. . . . I knew not that she was the mother of them all. . . . For she is an infinite treasure to men, which they that use, become the friends of God." [47] This passage clearly expresses the desire for the lights of the gift of wisdom. Therefore we understand why the Carmelite theologians, Philip of the Blessed Trinity,[48] Anthony of the Holy Ghost, and the Dominican Vallgomera, in the passages where they speak of the desire for infused contemplation, say: "All ought to aspire to supernatural contemplation." Joseph of the Holy Ghost speaks in like terms: "We may all aspire to it, ardently desire it, and humbly ask it of God." [49]

The Direction of Souls in Relation to Contemplation

Before any sign of an immediate call to contemplation, it is certainly advisable to point out to souls the grandeur of the spirit of faith, which inclines one to consider all things from God's point of view: the mysteries of religion, Christian worship, persons, whether pleasing to us or not, pleasurable or painful events. Only with the grace of contemplation is this lofty and supernatural consideration of all things perfect and lasting. Thus contemplation may be spoken of discreetly, without being named.

All souls can certainly be led to desire a sweet and penetrating faith in the great mysteries of salvation, and it is fitting that they ask for it. In the same way, before the signs of predestination appear in a soul, it is made to desire eternal life. Hence it may with propriety desire everything that is in the normal way of eternal life.

[47] Wisd. 7:7-14.

[48] *Summa theol. myst.* (ed. 1874), II, 299; III, 43. Anthony of the Holy Ghost and Vallgornera later speak in exactly the same terms. Philip of the Blessed Trinity has been greatly copied, but he himself found this teaching in the Carmelite, John of Jesus Mary, whose works he extensively utilized, and in Alvarez de Paz, S.J., *De inquisitione pacis,* ed. 1617, Bk. 1, Part 3, chap. 27. Alvarez de Paz was also very much utilized by several authors who did not even mention his name.

[49] *Cursus theol. myst. scol.,* Vol. II, II Praed., disp. XI, q.2, nos. 18, 23.

We must, however, distinguish clearly here between intention and realization. In the intention, the end that is glimpsed and desired comes first, then the means. In the realization, the inverse is true; the soul must rise from the most modest means to higher ones. Here rash haste should be avoided, for it would lead to neglect of the intermediate steps; to do so would compromise everything. It would be like wishing to construct the roof of a building before laying the foundations, or to fly before having wings.

Souls should also be continually reminded of the ordinary conditions of true union with God: habitual recollection, complete renunciation, purity of heart, true humility, perseverance in prayer despite prolonged aridity, great fraternal charity. If to these conditions is joined love of the liturgy and of sacred doctrine, the soul truly prepares itself for the proximate call to the divine intimacy.

When the proximate call becomes manifest, souls should read the description given by St. John of the Cross [50] of the three signs of this call, or some other spiritual work offering the same doctrine. Such reading will keep them from being discouraged by the troubles and aridity of the night of the senses. Once the graces of contemplation have become frequent, the reading of the same works should be continued. This is especially true of those works that put the soul on guard against the desire for essentially extraordinary graces, that is, visions, revelations, and the stigmata.

As soon as these souls are less faithful, they should be told of the defects of proficients, of the love of the cross, of the necessity of a more profound purification of the spirit, which is the indispensable condition for close union with God and for the full perfection of Christian life.

Many contemporary theologians—Benedictines, Carmelites, Dominicans, Jesuits, and others—admit this doctrine in substance, as shown by an inquiry which appeared in *La Vie spirituelle.*[61] We agree with Father Maréchal, S.J., when he says: "Contemplative activity should, even in its higher degrees . . . , mark a relatively rare but normal development of the common life of grace. . . .

[50] *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. 9.

[61] "Notably the issue for May, 1931, suppl., pp. [67]–[75], containing the conclusion of this inquiry.

[This doctrine] echoes the most authentic tradition and now meets with scarcely any opposition." 52

We see why Alvarez de Paz, S.J., wrote: "We should blame ourselves if we never taste the ineffable sweetness of contemplation." e3 And it is well known that St. Francis de Sales concludes: "Holy contemplation is the end and the goal toward which all spiritual exercises tend." 84

To avoid the imprudences, the rash haste of those who might use this teaching as an authorization to neglect the intermediate steps, one should often recall, as we have just said, the conditions ordinarily required to receive the grace of the contemplation of the mysteries of faith: purity and humility of heart, simplicity of spirit, habitual recollection, and complete renunciation.

This traditional doctrine is briefly summed up in the lines we have already quoted from *The Imitation:* "There are found so few contemplative persons, because there are few that know how to withdraw themselves entirely from perishable creatures." 88 Contemplation is "the hidden manna" 86 given by God to generous souls as the normal prelude of the beatific vision.8*

83 *'Nouvelle Revue Théol.,* February, 1929, p. 182, quoted by Canon A. Saudreau in the article: "Pour fixer la terminologie mystique et pour obtenir une entente," *La Vie spirituelle,* June, 1929, suppl., p. [146].

88 *De inquisitione pacis* (ed. 1617), Bk. I, Part 111, chap. 27.

84 *Treatise on the Love of God,* Bk. VI, chap. 6.

88 Bk. Ill, chap. 31.

88 Apoc. 2:17.

87 Occasionally the title "acquired contemplation" has been applied to what is initial infused contemplation, because in it consideration has been given chiefly to the work of the spirit (symbolized by that of the *noria),* which prepares the soul to receive the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost. But it is fitting to denominate an act or a state by considering in it, not what is material as a preliminary disposition, but what is formal and new. Then the very nature of the act to be defined is expressed. Therefore it is better in this case to speak of initial infused contemplation, which begins with the passive night of the senses. This is the way that St. John of the Cross speaks when, after describing this purification, he says *(The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. 14): "The soul began to set out on the way of the spirit, the way of proficients, which is also called the illuminative way, or the way of infused contemplation, wherein God Himself teaches and refreshes the soul without meditation or any active efforts that itself may deliberately make."

CHAPTER XXXII

The New Elements in Infused Prayer

SOME declare that the explanation often given of infused prayer, which attributes it to a special inspiration received with docility through the gifts of the Holy Ghost, is insufficient. According to them, this explanation does not sufficiently account for what is new in infused prayer and shows that it differs only in degree from acquired prayer, in which the gifts of the Holy Ghost have begun to intervene in a latent manner.[1]

To explain this matter we shall examine two points: first, whether the character of newness always clearly appears in the transition

[1] On the subject of mystical contemplation we read in the *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* (April, 1936, p. 175): "It is the experience of a new presence of God. . . . This knowledge is so evidently new that all contemplatives are at first wonderstruck by its beauty, grandeur, and sweetness. If uneasiness soon begins to develop in the soul that fears illusion, it is never experienced in the very act itself of this contact with God which brings with it certitude and peace. It is no longer a question here of greater or less differences in what has been experienced up to this point; the experience is completely distinct from all that has been felt up to this moment." V. Lithard, C.S.Sp.

The author adds: "The theory of Canon Saudreau and of Father Garrigou-Lagrange seems insufficient here; this grace is not only eminent; it is, without being extraordinary, of a different nature."

Do inspiration and special illumination, received with docility through the gifts of understanding and wisdom, no longer suffice here, contrary to the teaching of so many great masters on these gifts and on infused prayer? The author seems to say so; nevertheless, according to him, there is no need of the angelic species, which, he says, was explicitly rejected by St. Thomas (De *veritate,* q. 18, a. 1); but he has recourse to the light of grace of which St. Thomas speaks in connection with the mystical knowledge Adam had while still innocent: "By a certain spiritual light and a divine influx into the mind of man, which was like an expressed similitude of uncreated light, he saw God" (De *veritate,* q. 18, a. 1); "By this mode he [Adam in his innocence] knew God not from visible creatures, but from a certain spiritual similitude Impressed on his mind" *(ibid.,* a.i). St. Thomas says in the same reference,

from acquired to infused prayer; next, whether this transition is to be explained by the inspiration and special illumination of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Whether the Character of Newness Always Appears Clearly

The character of newness is incontestably clear if a soul passes suddenly from more or less simplified discursive meditation (occasionally called, in its last phase, acquired contemplation) not to arid but to consoled quiet, which St. Teresa speaks of in the second chapter of the fourth mansion. In this infused prayer "the will is captivated" by the interior illumination that shows it the goodness of God present in it as a source of living water: "This joy is not, like earthly happiness, at once felt by the heart; after gradually filling it to the brim, the delight overflows throughout all the mansions and faculties. . . . They [the celestial waters] appear to dilate and enlarge us internally, and benefit us in an inexplicable manner, nor does even the soul itself understand what it receives." [2]

However, the saint says in the same chapter, it happens that in this state the understanding and imagination do not cease to be disturbed and to trouble the will.[3] The character of newness of infused prayer would, therefore, be still more sensible if the understanding itself were captivated and if the imagination and memory ceased to

two lines above: "From the perfection of grace, man in the state of innocence had the power to know God through interior inspiration from the radiation of divine wisdom."

It remains to be known in what this interior inspiration differs from the more or less elevated special inspiration which the gifts of understanding and wisdom dispose us to receive. This special inspiration of the gifts of understanding and wisdom is not made by means of sensible things (such as preaching), but is purely spiritual and is above discourse or reasoning. It will be difficult, therefore, to show that between it and the light of grace, which Adam had in his innocence, there is a difference not only of degree, but of nature. Moreover, in this same question 18 of *De veritate* (a.i ad 4um), St. Thomas says with regard to Adam in his innocence: "In contemplation God is seen through a medium, which is the light of wisdom elevating the mind to discern divine things" (it is the light of the gift of wisdom). And St. Thomas adds: "And thus by grace God is seen by the contemplative after the state of sin, although more perfectly in the state of innocence." This text is important.

**The Interior Castle,* fourth mansion, chap. 2.

• *Ibid.,* chap. 1; *The Way of Perfection,* chap. 31.

be disturbed, as happens in the prayer of union,[4] which is compared to rain which falls from heaven, and no longer only to the water wheel *(noria)* which draws water from a well.[5]

But more often it happens that the transition from the last acquired prayer to initial infused prayer is not so clearly distinguished. St. John of the Cross shows this in *The Dark Night,* where he describes the night of the senses, which is recognized by the three signs often cited: "The first is this: when we find no comfort in the things of God (proposed in a sensible way by the intermediary of the senses and the imagination, as in meditation). . . . The second test and condition of this purgation are that the memory dwells ordinarily upon God with a painful anxiety and carefulness; the soul thinks it is not serving God, but going backwards. . . . The third sign . . . is inability to meditate and make reflections, and to excite the imagination as before, notwithstanding all the efforts we may make; for God begins now to communicate Himself, no longer through the channel of sense, as formerly, in consecutive reflections, by which we arranged and divided our knowledge, but in pure spirit, which admits not of successive reflections, and in the act of pure contemplation." [6]

This prayer is initial infused contemplation, accompanied by persistent sensible aridity; consequently this state has often been called arid quiet. St. Jane de Chantal[7] often spoke of this prayer, which differs appreciably from the consoled quiet, described by St. Teresa in the second chapter of the fourth mansion. In the description given by St. John of the Cross, the character of newness of initial infused contemplation is not very striking. The same is true of the description contained in Bossuet's well known little work, *Manière facile et courte de faire l'oraison en foi.*

The first phase of this prayer is acquired, the second is patently infused.[8] Hence we can see why this prayer is spoken of as a mixed

[4] *The Interior Castle,* fifth mansion, chaps, i f.

[5] *Life,* by herself, chaps. 14, 18.

[6] Bk. I, chap. 9.

[7] *Réponses* (2nd ed.; Paris, 1665), pp. 508 ff.

[8] Bossuet says at the end of this admirable opuscule: "After the purgation of the soul by the purgatory of sufferings, through which it must necessarily pass, will come illumination, repose, joy, through intimate union with God, who will render this world, exile though it be, like a paradise for die soul."

Frequent meditation on this little work of Bossuet, will show that it differs notably from what he had said in *Instructions sur les états d'oraison* (no. 22),

prayer, in which the influence of the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which is at first latent, begins to make itself felt.®

The great spiritual writers have even pointed out several times that certain very generous interior souls often have infused contemplation without realizing it, since contemplation may exist in the great obscurities of the night of the senses and of that of the spirit.

The passage from acquired to infused prayer is not, therefore, always stamped with a marked character of newness; and, even when this new character is quite manifest, it is not the same in arid quiet and in consoled quiet.

The Explanation of This Transition

When the transition from acquired to infused prayer is slow, progressive, as St. John of the Cross describes it in the night of the senses, the special inspiration passively received through the gifts of the Holy Ghost sufficiently explains the new character that presents itself here.

But to understand it thus, we must see clearly the specific difference between the human mode in which even the infused virtues operate and the superhuman mode of operation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the acts of which have precisely as their immediate rule the illumination and special inspiration of the interior Master. This inspiration is an elevated form of actual operating grace, which moves us to act freely above all discursive deliberation. It is thus notably superior to common actual grace, called cooperating grace,

where he applied the name "extraordinary" to the prayers of simple presence of God, of surrender, and of quiet, and likewise from what he had said also in his work, *Mystici in tuto* (no. 41): "St. Francis de Sales reached the summit of perfection without having gone beyond discursive meditation." St. Jane de Chantal says the contrary in her *Réponses* (2nd ed.; Paris, 1665), pp. 508 ff.

In the opuscule of which we are speaking, Bossuet says of the prayer of simplicity that "the soul, through its fidelity in mortifying and recollecting itself, ordinarily receives it." The second phase of this prayer is infused: "Therefore leaving reasoning, the soul makes use of a sweet contemplation, which holds it peaceful, attentive, susceptible to the divine operations and impressions which the Holy Ghost communicates to it. It does little and receives much. . . . The less the creature works, the more powerfully God operates. . . . The divine influences enrich the soul with all sorts of virtues."

• Cf. *Note sur la contemplation acquise chez les théologiens du Carmel,* by Father Gabriel of St. Magdalen, C.D., reproduced in our book, *Perfection chrétienne et contemplation,* II, 745-68.

which moves us according to discursive deliberation to place a given act of faith, hope, charity, prudence, justice, or of some other virtue. St. Thomas stressed this difference profoundly in two articles which we have often explained: "Do the gifts differ [specifically] from the infused virtues by their object and their formal motive?" [10] "How does operating grace differ from cooperating grace?" [11]

The difference is manifest: For example, I see that the customary hour to say my Office has come; I move myself then (aided by common actual grace, which in this case is cooperating) to perform the acts of faith and religion proper to the recitation of this prayer.

On the contrary, in the midst of a difficult, absorbing study, I suddenly receive, without expecting it, a special inspiration to pray, either for a better comprehension of what I am reading or for a friend who must need prayers at that moment. In the first case, Christian prudence inclines me to say the Divine Office and to perform the acts of faith and religion that this liturgical prayer demands; in the second, the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which is above prudential deliberation, inclines me to pray.

There is certainly a new element here, although the transition from one mode to the other may at times be slow and progressive, and at others more rapid and even instantaneous.

When the transition is rapid—for example, if a soul passes with-

[10] *Summa,* la Ilae, q. 68, a. 1: "Man needs yet higher perfections whereby to be disposed to be moved by God." The *inspiratio specialis* is not only *motio quoad exercitium,* but also *regulatio* superior to that of reason enlightened by faith.

[11] *Summa,* la Ilae, q.in, a.2: "In that effect in which our mind is moved and does not move, but in which God is the sole mover, the operation is attributed to God, and it is with reference to this that we speak of operating grace. But in that effect in which our mind both moves and is moved, the operation is not only attributed to God, but also to the soul; and it is with reference to this that we speak of cooperating grace."

In *Christian Perfection and Contemplation* (pp. 290-94), we explained this difference at length. See also *ibid.,* pp. 272-77, on the specific distinction between the gifts and even the infused virtues, a distinction based on their formal motive. Their formal motive is the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which is the immediate rule of the act of the gifts; it is a superhuman direction which has as a consequence a superhuman mode of acting. This is evident when it is a question of the act of the gift of counsel, superior to the act of infused prudence. This is also the case in the inspiration of the gifts of understanding and wisdom, which leads to an act of penetrating and sweet faith (called an infused act), notably different from the act of faith to which we generally move ourselves by discursive deliberation with the help of cooperating grace.

out intermediary from simplified discursive meditation to the consoled quiet which is described by St. Teresa—why would not the inspiration and special illumination received through the gifts of the Holy Ghost suffice to explain it?

At this point in our study, it is important that we consider the gifts not only in a general, schematic, and bookish manner, but also in particular, in a concrete and living manner, as St. Thomas and the great spiritual writers, such as St. Bonaventure, Ruysbroeck, Tauler, and Father Lallemant, have described them.

The gift of knowledge explains the experimental knowledge of the emptiness of created things in contrast to divine things; in particular, such a knowledge of the gravity of mortal sin as an offense against God, that one has a horror of sin. This knowledge and horror have been remarked in certain converts at the moment of their conversion. The simple, attentive reading of books of piety, joined to the examination of conscience, could never have given them this lively contrition, which manifests a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost. In this case there is certainly a new element.

Likewise the gift of piety, which is in the will, explains why this faculty is captivated in the prayer of quiet by the sweet presence of God, experientially known, as St. Thomas says in his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans: "You have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father). For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God." [12]*St. Thomas remarks in the same passage that the Holy Ghost gives this testimony by the filial affection He inspires in us for Himself, to which we could not have moved ourselves by common actual grace. Thus the disciples of Emmaus said: "Was not our heart burning within us, whilst He spoke in the way, and opened to us the Scriptures?" [18] By the gift of piety, too, is explained, according to St. Thomas, what we read in the Epistle to the Romans: "The Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings." [14]*

Lastly, the gift of wisdom is, according to St. Thomas,[19] the prin-

[12] *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans,* 8:15 f.

[u] Luke 24:32.

[14] Rom. 8:26.

[TM] *Summa,* IIa IIae, q.45, a. 1, 2. Article 1 speaks of special inspiration, and Article 2 deals with the connaturalness which special inspiration employs to manifest to us how greatly the mysteries of faith correspond to our highest aspirations.

ciple of a quasi-experiential knowledge of the presence of God in us, a knowledge based both on the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost and on the connaturalness with divine things which comes from charity. The special inspiration makes use of this connaturalness which it actualizes (infused act of love) to show us how greatly the mysteries of faith satisfy to the full our loftiest aspirations and give rise to new ones. In this case there is an act of infused love and of infused knowledge, of sweet and penetrating faith. These acts are said to be infused, not only because they proceed from infused virtues (in this case from the theological virtues), but because they would not be produced without the special inspiration to which the gifts render us docile. We could not have moved ourselves to these acts by ourselves, with common actual grace, called cooperating grace; we needed a special operating grace.[16]

Reply to a Difficulty

It has been objected that this traditional explanation, although given by the greatest masters, shows only a difference of degree and not one of nature; therefore the really new character of infused prayer is not sufficiently explained.

To this objection we reply that there is clearly a specific difference, and not only a difference of degree, between the gifts of the Holy Ghost and the infused virtues. The rule of our acts differs according as they are performed either through or without the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost.[17] This is clear, for example, in regard to the inspiration of the gift of counsel which supplies for the imperfection of prudence when it is absolutely hesitant before an indiscreet question and is faced with the problem of avoiding a lie and keeping another's secret. Sometimes only the inspiration of the Holy Ghost will furnish the answer promptly. Such an inspiration will be given by the Holy Ghost to generous interior souls that are, on the whole, docile to Him.

This specific difference is manifest when a discursively deliberate act of prudence is followed by an act of the gift of counsel (above discursive deliberation), which proceeds from the special inspiration of the interior Master, in such a way that prudence, remaining

[16] *Summa,* la Ilae, q. 111, a. 2. Cf. *supra,* I, 91-93.
[17] *Summa,* la Ilae, q.68, a. 1, 2,3.

hesitant, is no longer exercised at the same time. But sometimes the special inspiration is given only to facilitate prudential deliberation, by reminding us, for example, of a certain expression from the Gospel; then the difference is less evident.

Similarly, a man who is steering a boat will find an appreciable difference between advancing by means of oars and advancing under the impulsion of a favorable wind; this difference is apparent when the wind becomes strong enough to dispense with rowing. In this case there is certainly more than a difference of degree. The difference is less obvious if the breeze does not dispense the rower from all effort, but only facilitates his work.

Just so, says St. Teresa, prayer may be symbolized by several different ways of watering a garden: one may draw water by hard labor from a well, or bring it up by a pump, called a *noria,* or irrigate the garden with water from a river, or lastly rain may water the garden.[18] If there is a brusque transition from the first way to the fourth, the change is manifest; but the transition may be made in a progressive manner. Moreover, infused prayer also, symbolized by the rain from heaven, may be explained by the special illumination and inspiration of the Holy Ghost, received through the gifts of understanding, wisdom, and piety, when these gifts, which grow with charity, exist in a higher degree.

We have shown at length elsewhere [19] that to explain mystical contemplation, according to St. Thomas and St. John of the Cross, it is not necessary to have recourse to infused species or ideas similar to those of the angels, that it suffices to have the infused light, called the special illumination and inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which grows continually in every generous interior soul that unites love of the cross with docility to the interior Master. Faith thus becomes increasingly penetrating and sweet.

Neither is it necessary to have recourse to prophetic light, since that of the gifts suffices. St. Thomas makes this point clear when he speaks of infused contemplation in Adam in the state of innocence and then in us. He says: "In contemplation God is seen by

[18] *Life,* chaps. 15-19.

[19] Cf. *Perfection chrétienne et contemplation,* II, first appendix, pp. [1]–[44] and p. [87]. Does mystical contemplation require infused ideas? The texts from the works of St. Thomas and those of St. John of the Cross enable us to reply in the negative.

this means which is the light of wisdom, which lifts the spirit to perceive divine things, although the divine essence is not seen immediately; and thus, since original sin, by grace God is seen by the contemplative, although less perfectly than in the state of innocence." [20] The light of wisdom spoken of here is the gift of wisdom which St. Thomas treats of *ex professo,* IIa IIae, q. 45. There is no reason to see in it a light specifically distinct from that which this gift disposes us to receive. Thus the new element found in infused prayer is sufficiently explained by the traditional doctrine of the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, received through the gifts. This point is confirmed by St. Thomas' emphatically clear teaching that the grace of the virtues and the gifts, which unites us to God, is very superior to graces *gratis datae,* which only make us know the signs of the divine intervention.[21]

Close union with God intimately present in us is superior to these signs, which are evidently subordinate to it. The divine reality, the hidden God, is superior to all symbols; excessive attention to these signs would, says St. John of the Cross, turn us away from infused contemplation, which attains God Himself in the obscurity of faith.

The Special Illumination of the Holy Ghost

In January, 1937, Father Lithard, C.S.Sp., sent the following statement of his exact opinion on the special illumination of the Holy Ghost to the editor of *La Vie spirituelle.*

Reverend Father:

La Vie spirituelle for November 1 published a short article on the occasion of a note which appeared under my name in the *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique. I* should like to add some precise statements to that note, and I trust that you will accept them as readily as did Father

[20] *De veritate,* q. 18, a. 1 ad 4. Cf. also, IIa IIae, q. 5, a. 1 ad 1um; Ia, q. 94, a. 1 ad 3 um.

[21] *Summa,* Ia IIae, q. 111, a. 5: "Sanctifying grace is nobler than *gratia gratis data.*" Therefore if mystical contemplation, properly so called, depended on prophetic light or any other *gratia gratis data,* since the latter is inferior to the grace of the virtues and gifts, it might happen that a great contemplative was not a mystic and a person only meagerly endowed with contemplation was very mystical, for the first would have the gifts in a very high degree, but without prophetic light, and the second would have this light without a high degree of the gifts.

Garrigou-Lagrange when I spoke to him about the question in which I referred to him. I shall be brief.

I readily agree with Father Garrigou-Lagrange about the distinction that should be made between the helps which strengthen our personal initiative and those which manifest the divine initiative. In the first, the mode is purely human and we have no experience of it; the others, on the contrary, bear the mark of the gifts through which we receive them; they are "instinctive," and we are easily aware of them. We have experience of passivity.

But I pointed out that the helps received through the gifts do not all seem to be of the same nature, a point which Father Garrigou-Lagrange does not seem disposed to concede. Why, he says, "would special illumination not suffice" in the second case as well as in the first? My answer is this: because the experience of the mystics seems clearly to demand another kind of illumination in infused contemplation. Whereas hitherto, under the plainly instinctive action of graces, either of prayer or of action, they have been conscious only of their own acts,—acts, moreover, which are within their capacity, abstraction being made of instinctive delight, with the sole helps conceded to their personal initiative—in infused contemplation they have, in addition, the consciousness of being in contact with God, to the extent that they speak with assurance of seeing, feeling, touching God. And, on doing so, they no longer refer only to the passivity of this specific act which is beyond all human power. For this reason we declare that these acts are doubly infused and supernatural. And it is at this point that these fortunate privileged souls speak of a distinctly new, additional experience, introducing them as it were into another world: what they knew by faith, they taste in faith. Evidently it is the gifts which serve to receive these graces, since they are by their nature, as Father Garrigou-Lagrange willingly agrees, *habitus receptivi,* and not *operative,* as the virtues are.

Must we not, moreover, admit, beyond indistinct infused contemplation, helps of another nature for distinct infused contemplation, which requires infused species that render it extraordinary? God is rich, and therefore varied in His gifts.

But I quite willingly admit with Father Garrigou-Lagrange that the transitions are divinely gentle, at first scarcely perceptible insinuations, whose nature is shrouded in distant mystery and reveals itself only progressively. Is this not true in all God's works? If it is hard to say where one color ends and another begins in the work of nature, must we be astonished at our ignorance in the work of grace?

The Special Illumination of the Gift of Wisdom Sufficient for Infused Contemplation

In the preceding pages we have already answered the questions asked in Father Lithard's letter. To complete the subject we shall add the following observations.

1. To explain the new element in infused contemplation, we must recall the specific difference between the gifts of the Holy Ghost and the Christian virtues, emphasizing the fact that the gifts dispose us to receive the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost which moves us, above discursive deliberation, to infused acts to which we could not have moved ourselves deliberately by the virtues alone with the help of actual cooperating grace. Thus, we said, there is a notable difference, and more than a difference of degree, in the progress of a boat by dint of rowing or under the impulse of a favorable wind, although at times the breeze favors the work of the rowers without rendering it useless. Similarly, the gifts are exercised in a latent manner in the ascetical life, and at times in a manifest but rare manner; when their influence becomes at once frequent and manifest to an experienced director, then the mystical life begins. This life is quite easily discerned by the three signs which St. John of the Cross gives of the passive purification of the senses, in which, he says, infused contemplation begins.[22]

We also pointed out that the new character of infused contemplation appears more clearly when one passes from discursive meditation (symbolized, for example, by the *noria)* to consoled quiet;[23] whereas this new character stands out less clearly when one passes, as ordinarily happens, from discursive meditation to the arid quiet of the passive night of the senses.

2. We admit a great variety in the gifts, since each has its distinct specification. For example, among the intellectual gifts, that of counsel, which is of a purely practical order, supplies for the imperfections of even infused prudence; the gift of knowledge, which is often exercised in the aridity of the night of the senses, shows us either the nothingness of creatures and the gravity of sin, or the symbolism of sensible things in relation to divine things. The gift

[22] *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chaps. 8, 9, 14.
[23] *The Interior Castle,* fourth mansion.

of understanding gives us a special penetration of the truths of faith, as happens particularly in the night of the spirit in spite of the great spiritual aridity found therein. Lastly, the gift of wisdom gives us a quasi-experiential knowledge of the presence of God in us by the wholly filial affection, by the infused love, which God inspires in us for Himself.[24]

3. We have also often pointed out that in certain mystical souls the intellectual gifts, even that of wisdom, do not intervene under the form of a brilliant light, as in the great contemplatives, but under the form of a diffused light which is, nevertheless, very precious, for it illumines all things from above, in particular one's conduct and the good to be done to souls. This is the case, for example, in the entire apostolic life of St. Vincent de Paul.

4. What we do not admit is that one and the same *habitus,* like that of the gift of wisdom, is ordained to acts of a different nature in such a way that the ordinary mode of the first would not be ordained to the extraordinary mode of the second. The unity of the *habitus* would no longer be safeguarded. We explained our thought in this matter in *La Vie spirituelle,*[25] and we need not repeat it here. Suffice it to state here that St. Thomas clearly admits that the same gift, for example, that of wisdom, has acts that differ notably on earth and in heaven, but the earthly mode in the obscurity of faith is essentially ordained to the celestial mode, which will be found in the clarity of vision; thus, the unity of the *habitus* is safeguarded. It would not be so otherwise.

The gifts dispose us to receive a special inspiration, but in view of a determined operation having a formal object, which specifies one gift rather than another. By the gifts, St. Thomas says, we are more passive than active, but each is a *habitus receptivus,* ordained to a special action and not to actions of different natures.[26] It is thus that contemplation, to which the gift of wisdom is ordained, merits by its very nature the name of "infused," since we cannot obtain it by our own efforts and it absolutely requires a special

14 Cf. St. Thomas, *Conrm. in Ep. ad Rom.,* 8:16.

25 October 1, 1933. Cf. *supra,* I, 78-82.

29 The seven gifts cannot be specified, as Father Lithard would wish, by simple receptivity, independently of the formal object of their acts. Were this true, two gifts would suffice, one in the intellect and the other in the will, to enable these faculties to receive the divine impulsion. As a matter of fact, there are seven specifically distinct gifts.

inspiration or illumination of the Holy Ghost, which we can only receive, as the earth receives the desired rain.

We are not speaking here of the more or less extraordinary phenomena that accidentally accompany infused contemplation, or of the occasionally simultaneous influence of certain graces *gratis datae.* But we are speaking of what is essentially required for infused contemplation, which has, moreover, many degrees, from the passive night of the senses up to the transforming union.

To avoid all confusion, all these questions should be distinguished from one another. This being the case, we say that, according to St. Thomas and St. John of the Cross, the full normal actualization of the gift of wisdom deserves the name of infused contemplation, properly so called, and that without this contemplation the full normal actualization of this gift does not yet exist. We do not believe that a Thomist can deny this proposition.

5. We have also established at length [27] that, according to St. Thomas and St. John of the Cross, infused contemplation does not demand infused species or infused ideas, but only the infused light of the gifts of understanding and wisdom, or the special illumination which they dispose us to receive. Replying to Father Lithard,[28] we showed that the texts from St. Thomas on the mystical knowledge of Adam in the state of innocence do not permit us to affirm anything additional. The light of wisdom, which he speaks of in *De veritate,*[29] is clearly the infused light of the gift of wisdom, which he treats of *ex professo* in the *Summa.* [0]

Moreover, in his letter Father Lithard, in order to characterize the distinctly new experience of mystics "which introduces them into another world," says: "What they knew by faith, they taste in faith." This is, strictly speaking, the quasi-experiential knowledge which, according to St. Thomas, proceeds from the gift of wisdom and makes faith sweet. In these spiritual tastes, so different from sensible consolations, there are, besides, many degrees, from the initial infused contemplation of the passive night of the senses up to that of the transforming union.

If essentially mystical contemplation required a special light other

"Perfection chrétienne et contemplation, 7th ed., II,
** *La Vie spirituelle,* November, 1936, pp. [203] ff.
'' Q. 18, a. i ad 411m.
•° Cf. Ila Ilae, q.45.

than that to which the gift of wisdom normally disposes us, there might be a great non-mystical contemplative who would have a high degree of the gift of wisdom without this special particularity; and, inversely, there might be a mystic who would not have the eminent exercise of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, but only a charismatic light suggestive rather of graces *gratis datae.*

6. In our writings on these subjects over a period of twenty years, we have pointed out that, as a rule, the persons who adhere to the doctrine that we consider traditional are especially those who have experience of infused contemplation, and that many of those who do not adhere to this doctrine admit that they have not this experience. But they seek to imagine it according to their reading, and question the meaning of the terms used by the mystics: *to see God, to feel Him, to touch Him.* It is not indeed a question of the immediate vision of God as He is but, as St. Thomas says, of a quasi-experiential knowledge of God in the infused love which He inspires in us for Himself.[81]

In that part of his letter where he says, as it were incidentally, "abstraction being made of instinctive delight," Father Lithard recognizes that this delight is not within our capability or in our power, but that it is infused. Is it then something negligible? And is it not precisely because of this delight that farther on in the same letter he can write: "The fortunate privileged souls speak of a distinctly new, additional experience, introducing them as it were into another world: what they knew by faith, they taste in faith"? This is what St. Thomas always calls the essential effect of the gift of wisdom, when he quotes the well-known text: "Taste, and see that the Lord is sweet."[32]

7. Father Lithard thinks that the masters of the spiritual life have given us the general principles, but have left us the task of stating them precisely: a question of progress in this branch of theology, as in dogmatic and moral theology.

We believe that masters like St. Thomas, St. John of the Cross,

[81] Cf. St. Thomas, *In Ep. ad Rom.,* 8:16: "The Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God by the effect of filial love which He produces in us." The texts of St. Thomas relative to the quasi-experiential knowledge of God through the gift of wisdom have been assembled several times; we did so in *The Love of God and the Cross of Jesus,* I, 140-73, when treating this question *ex professo.*

[32] Ps. 33:9.

and St. Francis de Sales, have given us more than general principles, and that we are still far from a full comprehension of what their works contain on these difficult questions. Before setting ourselves the task of completing their work, we must try to understand thoroughly what they have written. In particular the author of *The Dark Night* and *The Living Flame* has stated with great care and precision what concerns infused contemplation and its various degrees, and what it is in the passive purifications or outside of them. To state more precisely and to complete what St. John of the Cross says about these lofty questions, one would need great experience in these matters, coupled with a profound knowledge of theology. Progress here is something very elevated and is realized as a rule not by those who propose it to themselves in advance, but by those to whom it is given to accomplish it, as was the case with St. John of the Cross. It still remains for us to penetrate, to grasp more profoundly, what he has taught, avoiding every excessively material interpretation that would constitute a serious diminution of his thought.

We must always revert to the definition of infused contemplation given by St. John of the Cross in *The Dark Night,* a definition that is so conformable to the teaching of St. Thomas: "Contemplation is the science of love, which is an infused loving knowledge of God." [88] In this definition St. John does not speak of a direct and immediate intuition of the supernatural gifts of grace and of the infused virtues, an intuition which, moreover, would give us a certitude of being in the state of grace before even reaching the transforming union. For all these reasons we maintain here what we stated about the intimate nature of infused contemplation in articles 3-6, chapter 4 of *Christian Perfection and Contemplation.*

·· *The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chap. 18.

CHAPTER XXXIII

The Agreement and Differences Between St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross

EVEN after a single reading of the works of St. Teresa and of St. John of the Cross it is easy to note differences between them, which have often been pointed out. We shall indicate here especially the origin of these differences.

The Cause of These Differences

The differences found in the works of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross are due to the diversity of their point of view. St. Teresa speaks a great deal from her personal experiences and describes the seven mansions of the interior castle by mentioning extraordinary graces which she herself had received (suspension of the senses, ecstasies, and visions), without taking particular care to distinguish these phenomena, which are in a way exterior and accidental, from what constitutes the basis of the mystical life, from the essential element in each of the seven mansions. St. Teresa is thus led to give more importance than other authors do to sensible phenomena, which sometimes accompany infused contemplation and mystical union. She also insists on the consideration of our Savior's humanity. In short, she is less attentive than others in distinguishing in the seven mansions what pertains to the normal way of sanctity, in particular the passive purifications which this sanctity presupposes.

St. John of the Cross no doubt also speaks from personal experience and from that of the souls he directed, but without mentioning it, for he seeks especially what is essential in the progress of the soul toward close union with God. He made a theological study of these matters, which St. Teresa did not, and his study has

unquestionably great importance in distinguishing what is normal from what is accessory or accidental. In relation to the interior life, he examined thoroughly what theology teaches about the three theological virtues and the gifts that accompany them. Consequently he endeavors to explain the states of prayer of contemplative souls by the causes which produce them, linking them to infused faith, vivified by charity and illumined by the gifts of wisdom and understanding, thereby discerning better what the progress of the love of God should ordinarily be in every truly generous contemplative soul. From this point of view, he is particularly attentive to what is in the normal way of sanctity, and he studies more profoundly than any of his predecessors the passive purifications of the senses and of the spirit, necessary for the perfect purity of the love of God. Hence he is led to insist less on the extraordinary graces which sometimes accompany infused contemplation and which, in his works, appear more like concomitant phenomena that are, so to speak, exterior and accidental. He also dwells less on the consideration of our Savior's humanity, that he may fix his attention on the primary object of infused contemplation, which proceeds from faith under the special inspiration of the gifts of understanding and wisdom; this object is God Himself, present in us and attained in the obscurity of faith by a quasi-experiential knowledge, which He Himself excites in us.

We, as well as many others, have often pointed out these differences. They show that the author of *The Dark Night* does much to complete what we read in St. Teresa and they make the understanding of her works easier for the theologian who seeks to explain, by their proximate principle or their cause, the states described by the mystics.

Whether These Differences Have a Common Basis

In recent years a number of theologians (Father Arintero, O.P., Father Garate, S.J., Canon Saudreau, and several others) have shown that these differences have a common basis. We expressed the same opinion in *Christian Perfection and Contemplation.*[1] As a matter of fact, although St. Teresa speaks from personal experience, she is sufficiently well acquainted with that of her daughters to be able

[1] Cf. pp. 141 ff.; ÏJO-ÔO; 368 ff.; 379 fl.; 44<$.

to set forth in the description of the seven mansions what ordinarily happens to souls passing through them. And, making use of the indications that she gives in various passages, we can discern more clearly what is essential to the mystical life, even in each of the seven mansions, and what is only a concomitant phenomenon, such as ecstasy or a beginning of ecstasy. As we have pointed out[2] several times, St. Teresa says clearly that in the prayer of quiet first of all the will alone is seized, captivated by God, then the intellect and the imagination; finally, in ecstasy, the exercise of the exterior senses is suspended. But St. Teresa knows that the suspension of the imagination and the senses is only a concomitant and accessory phenomenon of infused contemplation. Speaking to her daughters she says: "In reality there are very few who never enter this mansion: some more and some less, but most of them may be said at least to gain admittance into these rooms. I think that certain graces I am about to describe are bestowed on only a few of the nuns, but if the rest only arrive at the portal, they receive a great boon from God, for 'many are called, but few are chosen.' " [3]

St. Teresa is well aware of the fact that ecstasy is not a certain sign of a greater intensity of knowledge and love of God, since she says that it generally ceases in the most perfect mystical state, the transforming union.[4] Father Lallemant, S.J., rightly insisted on this point.[5]

St. Teresa also notes that in the prayer of quiet, "where the will alone is captive," the other faculties are at times the auxiliaries of the will and engage in its service; at other times their contribution serves only to trouble it. "When the will enjoys this quiet," she says, "it should take no more notice of the understanding (or imagination) than it would of an idiot." [6] The saint also says that the consolation springing from the prayer of quiet is often interrupted by aridities, by temptations against patience and chastity, that is, by the trials which St. John of the Cross speaks of in the passive night of the senses.[7] This explains why, even for St. Teresa, over

[2] *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* pp. 2jof.
[3] *The Interior Castle,* fifth mansion, chap. i.
[4] *Ibid.,* seventh mansion, chap. 3.
[5] Cf. *La Doctrine spirituelle,* seventh principle, chap. *6,* a. 7.
[6] *The Way of Perfection,* chap. 31; *The Interior Castle,* fourth mansion, chap. i.
[7] *The Way of Perfection, chaps.* 24, 28; *The Interior Castle,* fourth mandon, chap. I.

and above consoled quiet, there is arid quiet, which St. Jane de Chantal[8]*described several times, and which is found in what the author of *The Dark Night* calls the passive purification of the senses.

St. Teresa also points out that the prayer of union, described in the fifth mansion, is often incomplete, without the suspension of the imagination and memory, which sometimes wage a veritable war on the understanding and the will.® Then, as in the prayer of quiet, the soul should pay no more attention to the imagination than to an idiot.[10] St. Teresa is speaking of this incomplete mystical union when she says: "Is it necessary, in order to attain to this kind of divine union, for the powers of the soul to be suspended? No; God has many ways of enriching the soul and bringing it to these mansions besides what might be called a 'short cut.' " [11]

Some have believed this "short cut" and the delights found in it to be infused or mystical contemplation, whereas it is only the suspension of the imagination and the memory, or a beginning of ecstasy, which sometimes accompanies mystical union and greatly aids it. Father Arintero, O.P.,[12]*Father Garate, S.J.,[13] and Canon Saudreau [14]*have shown this to be so.

If St. Teresa were to say that a soul can reach the fifth mansion by a non-mystical way, or without infused contemplation, she would state the contrary of what she often affirms in *The Way of Perfection* [16]*and also in the fourth mansion of *The Interior Castle.* Since, as a matter of fact, in the fourth mansion the prayers of supernatural or passive recollection and quiet are already infused (and this is the essential characteristic of this period of the interior life), with even greater reason those of the fifth mansion are infused.[18]

The prayer of passive union is, therefore, not extraordinary in its principle or in its very essence, although certain of its accidental, concomitant phenomena may be. St. John of the Cross certainly

[8] *Réponses de sainte Jeanne de Chantal* (ind ed.; Paris, 1665), p. 508; *Œuvres diverses* (Paris, 1876), II, 268, the opuscule on *l'Oraison de quiétude.*

[a] *Life,* chap. 17.

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] *The Interior Castle,* fifth mansion, chap. 3.

[ia] *Evolution mistica* (2nd ed.), pp. 667 ff.; *Cuestiones mlsticas* (2nd ed.), PP.

laRaz6n Y Fe, July, 1908, pp. 325 ff.

[14] *Degrés de la vie spirituelle* (jth ed.), II, 101, no. 2; *L'Etat mystique* (2nd ed.), nos. 40, 116.

[18] Cf. chaps. 18-21.

[14] Cf. also her *Life,* chap. 17; *The Foundations,* chap. 4.

shows this more clearly, but even in *The Interior Castle* it is quite manifest.

Lastly, it should be noted that St. Teresa describes in the first chapter of the sixth mansion a very painful period of trial which manifestly corresponds to what St. John of the Cross calls the passive night of the spirit preceding perfect union. St. Teresa speaks of "the interior anguish of the soul at the sight of its own wretchedness. . . . For one of the severe trials of these souls . . . is their belief that God permits them to be deceived in punishment for their sins. . . . When . . . they discover any faults in themselves, these torturing thoughts return. . . . They become almost unbearable. Especially is this the case when such spiritual dryness ensues that the mind feels as if it never had thought of God, nor ever will be able to do so."

These observations permit us to recognize a common principle under the differences found between St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross. Moreover, how could it be otherwise, since both of them describe the way of perfect union and the different stages in this ascent?

A Recent Objection

Quite recently, however, in the *Traduction nouvelle des oeuvres de saint Jean de la Croix,* by Mother Mary of the Blessed Sacrament of the Carmel of Mangalore (Vol. Ill, appendix 5), the translator, to whom we owe a fluent and generally faithful version of the works of St. Teresa (known as the Edition of the Carmelites of Paris), insists almost solely on the differences between the two great saints of Carmel. This appendix recalls the general introduction of the same work, which seemed to reach the conclusion that there is disagreement between the two saints, especially in regard to the consideration of Christ's humanity. In the *Etudes Carmélitaines* (April, 1934), Father Eliseus of the Nativity insisted on rectifying immediately certain conclusions, which he declared to be contrary to the text of *The Interior Castle* and to the ensemble of the teaching of St. John of the Cross.[17] He writes as follows: "In vain Reverend Mother eagerly repeats that it is not a question of 'contradiction'; we are surprised to learn suddenly from her that St. John of the

[17] Cf. p. 191.

Cross was—Heavens! it must be said—so roughly treated by the Foundress." [18]

In the fifth appendix, contained in the third volume of this translation, the translator insists on eleven differences relating to the way the two saints conceived of contemplation, its beginnings, infused character, the cooperation that the soul may bring to it, by disposing itself for it or failing to do so, relating also to the passive purifications, to the role of faith in contemplation, to extraordinary favors, to illusions, to the humanity of Christ, to death to the world. After these eleven differences, one would expect to see the points of agreement between these two great saints on the lofty subject of infused contemplation and the union with God resulting from it. However, we are told nothing about this subject. The translator seems even to believe that, to find this agreement, the profound knowledge which theology can give of the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost is not of great use.

As a rule Thomistic theologians, those of Carmel as well as those of the Order of St. Dominic, especially Cajetan, O.P.,[19] Joseph of the Holy Ghost, C.D.,[20] more recent writers,[21] Father Gardeil, O.P.,[22] and also Father de la Taille, S.J., and many others hold that infused contemplation proceeds from infused faith enlightened by the gifts (a *fide infusa donis illustrata},* or that it is "an act of the virtue of faith actuated by the Holy Ghost, whose touch causes the gifts to vibrate."

On this subject the translator tells us: "As for these subtle deductions, we are far from making them ours. It is certain that St. John of the Cross gives faith an extremely preponderant place in his mystical teaching.—Does St. Teresa make contemplation rest on the exercise of the virtue of faith? In no way." [23]

If this were really the case, there would be a serious disagreement. But she is obliged to recognize a few lines farther on that

[18] *Ibid.,* p. 187.

[19] On Ila Ilae, q-4J, a.i.

[20] *Cursus theol. seal, mysticae* (old ed.), Vol. II, dist. 13, p. 395.

[21] We treated this question in *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* pp. 330 f.

[22] *La Structure de l'âme et l'expérience mystique* (1927), II, 171, on the expression: "Faith enlightened by the gifts."

[23] *Traduction nouvelle des oeuvres de saint Jean de la Croix,* Vol. Ill, appendix j, p. 483.

"the virtue of faith evidently exists in her contemplation [that of St. Teresa] like a substratum." Then how can she maintain that St. Teresa "does not make contemplation rest in any way whatsoever on the exercise of the infused virtue of faith"?

And how faintly comprehend "the extremely preponderant place" which she admits that St. John of the Cross gives to faith in his mystical teachings, if one does not go more deeply into what the theology of St. Thomas and his best commentators can tell us on this subject, if one dispenses oneself from examining it, and says: "As for these subtle deductions, we are far from making them ours"? Would St. Teresa, who willingly sought light from theologians, have spoken thus?

In the same appendix, apropos of what we wrote in *Perfection chrétienne et contemplation* [24] on the subject of the passage from meditation, which has become impracticable, to initial infused contemplation (with the meaning given to it by St. John of the Cross), the translator reminds us that, "to advise St. Teresa's prayer of quiet for a soul which God does not gratify with it, would be entirely wasted effort."[25] We did not at all forget when writing that passage that the prayer of quiet is infused and not acquired, even in its essential element, abstraction being made of a given concomitant and consoling phenomenon which facilitates it. We said repeatedly in the same work that no one can acquire it, although one can prepare oneself to receive the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost which is its proximate principle. With this meaning, St. Teresa herself speaks of the *noria* (waterwheel) which symbolizes this work, which prepares the soul to receive the divine illumination.[2]

The translator also points out to us in the same appendix, apropos of the aforementioned passage, that we did not mention between "meditation, which has become impracticable" and "the prayer of quiet," the initial obscure contemplation which St. John of the Cross speaks of in the night of the senses (that contemplation later on occasionally called acquired or mixed contemplation, which prepares for infused), or that which St. Jane de Chantal speaks of. We are all the more surprised at this remark since, in the lines which precede the passage mentioned and in those which follow it, we speak

[24] Cf. Vol. II, append., p. [42].
[25] *Traduction nouvelle,* Vol. III, appendix 5, p. 497.
[2] Cf. *Life,* chap. 14.

precisely of the initial infused contemplation of St. John of the Cross, and of that of "simple surrender to God" of St. Jane de Chantal.[27]

We conclude by repeating that if between the two great mystics of Carmel there exist certain differences easy to see and often pointed out, which are clearly explained by the fact that St. John of the Cross is a theologian and St. Teresa is not, there is, nevertheless, in their works an undeniable common principle, a fundamental conception of infused contemplation, of the union with God which results from it, and of the passive purifications necessary to reach perfect union.

If it is fitting to point out their differences, it is even more important to indicate their fundamental agreement; and in order to see in what this harmony consists, one should not neglect the help which the profound study of theology can give in these difficult questions. It is highly important to distinguish in the mystical life, and even in each of the seven mansions, between what is essential and normal and what is an accessory and concomitant phenomenon.[28]

[27] *Perfection chrétienne et contemplation,* Vol. II, pp. [41]–C43].

[28] On what belongs to the normal way of sanctity according to St. John of the Cross, we are happy to point out the collection of four lectures given in Rome in March, 1936, by Father Gabriel of St. Magdalen, C.D., under the title: *San Giovanni della Croce, Dottore dell'Amore divino,* Florence, 1936.

PART IV

The Unitive Way of the Perfect

SECTION I

The Entrance into the Unitive Way through the Night of the Spirit

IN accordance with our plan for the division of this work,[1] we shall follow the teaching of St. John of the Cross, who is the faithful echo of the tradition of the great spiritual writers, and treat of the night of the spirit at the beginning of the unitive way, since, according to the Mystical Doctor, the night of the spirit marks the entrance into this way, understood in its full and intense meaning. We shall see the nature of the passive purification of the spirit, the conduct to be observed in it, its effects, and the principal characteristics of the spiritual age of the perfect or of souls already purified.

Division of Part IV

In this fourth part we shall discuss, first of all, the entrance into the unitive way. According to St. John of the Cross, the soul enters this way by the passive purification of the spirit, which he explains in the second book of *The Dark Night.* In our opinion the Mystical Doctor thus preserves and examines thoroughly the traditional doctrine, because he considers the illuminative way of proficients and the unitive way of the perfect not in their diminished forms, but in their normal plenitude. From this higher point of view, the illuminative way demands the passive purification of the senses, which, we have seen, marks the entrance to it and is like a second conversion, analogous to that of the apostles, especially of Peter, during the dark night of the Passion. For the same reason, the unitive way of the perfect demands a passive purification of the spirit, which is like a third conversion, or rather a transformation of the soul, simi-

[1] Cf. *rupra,* I, 14.

lar to that experienced by the apostles when, after being painfully deprived of the presence of Christ on Ascension Day, they received the Holy Ghost on Pentecost. This new purification strengthened them greatly and prepared them for their apostolate, which, from then on, was to have its source in the plenitude of the contemplation of the mystery of Christ. This was truly the case, as St. Peter's sermons on Pentecost and the following days show.[2]

We shall, therefore, discuss, first of all, the necessity of the passive purification of the spirit because of the defects which subsist in proficients or the advanced. We shall see the nature of this purification and its theological explanation; we shall give the rules for direction appropriate at this stage, and point out the effects of this purification and its concomitant trials.

It will then be easier to characterize the spiritual age of the perfect, to see the nature of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in the purified soul, to describe the contemplative faith of the perfect, their confidence in God, their abandonment, charity, and zeal. We shall thus be led to speak of the transforming union, following chiefly St. John of the Cross, and of the radiation of this intimate union with God in the life of reparation and in the apostolate. We shall thus be able better to determine what constitutes the full perfection of Christian life, the normal prelude of the life of heaven and the immediate disposition to receive the beatific vision without passing through purgatory.

To show more clearly in what this normal plenitude of Christian life consists, we shall not discuss in this section the essentially extraordinary graces that sometimes accompany and even precede the transforming union; we shall deal with them in the following section. Thus we can draw a clearer distinction between every essentially extraordinary grace and the normal summit of the life of grace on earth, that is, the full development of the virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. To be sure, this summit is an eminent and relatively rare state, like lofty perfection; but it does not follow that it is an intrinsically extraordinary favor, like the gift of prophecy and other charisms, or graces *gratis datae,* which are, besides, inferior to sanctifying grace. St. Thomas[8] proves that prophecy and other

1 Acts 2 f. We discussed the second and third conversions at greater length in a little book, which appeared in 1932, entitled *Les Trois conversions et les trois voies.*

[8] *Summa,* la Ilae, q. in, a.j: "The end is always greater than the means.

similar charisms are only as it were exterior signs, whereas sanctifying grace, from which proceed charity, the other infused virtues, and the gifts, unites us to God and tends while growing to unite us ever more closely to Him, until it merits the name of consummated grace, which is eternal life itself.

But sanctifying grace ordains a man immediately to a union with his last end, whereas *gratia gratis data* ordains a man to what is preparatory to the end; i.e., by prophecy and miracles and so forth, men are induced to unite themselves to their last end. And hence sanctifying grace is nobler than *gratia gratis data."*

CHAPTER XXXIV

The Necessity of the Passive Purification of the Spirit, and the Prelude of the Unitive Way

CHRIST said: "I am the true vine; and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, He will take away: and every one that beareth fruit, He will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit. . . . He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit. . . . If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will; and it shall be done unto you." [1] But to reach this state, the good branch must be pruned. In his commentary on St. John's Gospel, St. Thomas says: "In the natural vine, the branch which has many shoots yields less fruit, because the sap loses its efficacy by excessive diffusion in these superfluous shoots; therefore the vine-dresser prunes them. Something similar occurs in a man who is well disposed and united to God, but whose affection and life are excessively exteriorized in various ways; the strength of his interior life is then diminished and less efficacious in regard to the good to be accomplished. For this reason the Lord, who in this respect is like the vine-dresser, prunes His good servants and frequently cuts away what is useless in them so that they may bear more fruit. He purifies them for a long time, sending them tribulations, permitting temptations that oblige them to a holy and meritorious resistance, which renders them stronger in regard to the good. The Lord inures to war and thus purifies those who are already pure, for no one is ever sufficiently so on earth, according to St. John's statement: 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us' (I John 1:8). Thus the Lord purifies His servants so that they may bear more fruit,

[1] John 15:1, 5, 7.

that they may grow in virtue and be proportionately richer in good works as they are more pure."

This text from St. Thomas' commentary on St. John refers properly to the passive purifications, which the just man does not impose upon himself like mortification, but which he receives from God. Thus was purified holy Job, who declared: "The life of man upon earth is a warfare." [2] It is a time of laborious and painful service, a time of trial, like the life of a soldier. Such it was for the apostles after Christ left them on Ascension Day, and they assembled in the upper room to pray and prepare themselves for the struggles which Christ had announced to them, and which were to be crowned by their martyrdom.

The fathers of the Church and spiritual writers have often spoken in this intimate sense of the cross we must bear daily, the cross of the sensibility and that of the spirit, that the lower and the higher parts of the soul may gradually be purified, that the sensitive part may be perfectly subjected to the spirit, and the spirit to God.

The fathers have often commented on these words of Scripture: "As when one sifteth with a sieve, the dust will remain: so will the perplexity of a man in his thoughts. The furnace trieth the potter's vessels, and the trial of affliction just men." [3] "For gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation." [4] "From above He hath sent fire into my bones," [5] said Jeremias in his Lamentations. Christ likewise said to Peter before the Passion: "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." [6] Now this is realized especially in the passive purification of the spirit, which prepares the soul for the life of close union with God. St. Augustine,[7] St. Gregory the Great,[8][9] St. Maxim,[10] Hugh of St. Victor,[10] Ruysbroeck,[11] Tauler,[12] and more

[2] Job 7:1.
[3] Ecclus. 27:5 f.
[4] Ecclus. 2:5.
[5] Lam. 1:13.
[6] Luke 22:31.
[7] *De quantitate animae,* chap. 33.
[8] *Morales,* Bk. XXIV, chap. 6, no. 11; Bk. X, chap. 10, no. 17.
[9] *PG,* XC, *1215.*
[10] *Hom. I in Eccli., 1.*
[11] *Le Livre de la plus haute vérité,* chap. 7; *Les Sept degrés,* chaps. 11, 13 f.
[12] *Sermon pour le lundi avant les Rameaux; Ier Sermon pour la Pentecôte,* trad. Hugueny, I, 237-69; II, 28, 209, 211, 243.

profoundly St. John of the Cross,[11] have shown that this purification is necessary because of the defects that remain in the proficients or advanced.

The Defects of the Advanced

Consideration of this subject is advantageous to interior souls, especially for three reasons: that they may see more clearly the necessity and the value of the daily cross that each must carry; that they may also better discern the unreasonable troubles which they foolishly create for themselves from those which have a true purifying value; lastly, that they may get a more exact idea of purgatory, which will be necessary for them if they do not profit sufficiently by the crosses sent to them in this life.

There are still many defects in proficients who have made considerable progress, the inferior or sensible part of whose souls is already in large part purified, and who have begun to live the life of the spirit through the initial infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith. The stains of the old man still remain in their spirit like rust that will disappear only under the action of a purifying fire.

St. John of the Cross points out[14] that these advanced souls are still often subject to indirectly voluntary distractions in prayer, to dullness, to useless dissipation, to excessively human sympathy for certain persons, leading to a lack of esteem for others, which is more or less contrary to justice and charity. They have moments of natural rudeness, the result of the sin of impatience. Some fall into illusion by being too much attached to certain spiritual communications; they expose themselves to the devil, who takes pleasure in deceiving them by false prophecies. Others, under the same influence, fall into bitter zeal, which leads them to sermonize their neighbor and to deliver untimely remonstrances. Thereby, though unaware of it, these advanced souls are puffed up with spiritual pride and presumption and thus deviate from the simplicity, humility, and purity required for close union with God. St. John of the Cross says: "Some of them become so entangled in manifold falsehoods and delusions, and so persist in them that their return to the pure

[11] *The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chaps, yf. Cf. also St. Teresa, *The Interior Castle,* sixth mansion, chap, i; Blessed Angela of Foligno, *Livre des visions et instructions,* chaps. 6, 7,9,16.

[14] *The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chap. a.

road of virtue and real spirituality is exceedingly doubtful." [15] Evidently there are greater dangers than those at the beginning.

According to the holy doctor, this matter is inexhaustible; and so far he has considered only the defects relative to the purely interior life, to relations with God. What would it be if one were to consider the defects that advanced souls still have in their relations with superiors, equals, and inferiors; if one were to consider all that, in this period of the spiritual life, still injures charity and justice; all that, in those who have to teach, govern, or direct souls, stains their apostolate, teaching, government, and direction?

Spiritual or intellectual pride, which still subsists, inspires excessive attachment to personal judgment, to one's own way of seeing, feeling, sympathizing, willing. From it are born jealousy, secret ambition, or again great authoritarianism, unless one is by temperament inclined to the contrary defect, that is, to excessive indulgence and to weakness toward those who oppress others. Here too, may often be remarked a lack of promptness and generosity in obedience, or, on the contrary, a servility inspired by self-love. Frequent also are faults against charity through jealousy, envy, slander, discord, contention.

At this stage may reappear many deviations, which seriously trouble the life of the soul. The root of the higher faculties of intellect and will is still deeply tainted with pride, personal judgment, and self-will. The divine light and the will of God do not yet reign there uncontested; far from it. These stains, which are in the root of the higher faculties, have, in some cases, been there for a long time; they may become encrusted as they grow old and may profoundly alter the character by turning it away from true intimacy with God. Thence are bom many defamations and at times most grievous divisions among those who should work together for the good of souls.

St. John of the Cross says that this state of things shows that, "if they be not removed by the strong soap and lye of the purgation of this night, the spirit cannot attain to the pureness of the divine union." [18] "The intercourse of proficients with God is, however, still most mean, because the gold of the spirit is not purified and refined. They think, therefore, and speak of Him as children (they

« *Ibid.*
"*Ibid.*

have little understanding of the ways of Providence, which humiliates them in order to exalt them), and their feelings are those of children, as described by the Apostle: 'When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child,' [17] because they have not reached perfection, which is union with God in love. But in the state of union, having grown to manhood, they do great things in spirit—all their actions and all their faculties being now rather divine than human." [18] This is a clear way of stating that the full perfection of Christian life belongs normally to the mystical order, since it presupposes the passive purifications of the senses and of the spirit, which are sharply characterized passive or mystical states easily distinguished from melancholy and other fruitless spells of dejection of the same kind, as we shall see farther on. It is a question here of fruitful spiritual suffering and of a spiritual winter that prepares the germination of a new spring. Winter is indispensable in nature; there is also one which may be very useful in the life of the soul.

This is why St. Augustine used to say the prayer, often repeated centuries later by St. Louis Bertrand: "Lord, burn, cut, do not spare on this earth, that Thou mayest spare in eternity." It is important to be purified on earth with merit rather than after death without merit. Nothing soiled enters heaven; consequently, to enter there the soul must, sooner or later, undergo a profound purification. The beatific vision of the divine essence cannot, it is evident, be granted to a soul that is still impure.

The Depths of the Will to Be Purified

Before St. John of the Cross, Tauler greatly insisted on the depths of our will, which need to be purified from the often unconscious egoism that has for long subsisted in it, leading us to disturbing and fruitless conversation with ourselves and not to tranquilizing and vivifying conversation with God.

Tauler [19] often speaks of the unconscious egoism that still inclines us to seek ourselves in everything and at times to judge our neighbor with severity while treating ourselves with great indulg-

[17] Cf. I Cor. 13:11.

[x·] *The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chap. 3.

[18] Cf. *Sermon pour le samedi avant la vigile des Rameaux* (trans. Hugueny) 1,149.

ence. This same egoism which makes us seek ourselves in many things is especially evident when trial strikes us; we are then completely upset and seek help, consolation, and counsel from without, where God is not to be found. We have not built our house sufficiently on Christ the rock, with the result that it lacks solidity. We have built on self, on self-will, which is equivalent to building on sand; thus at times there is great weakness underlying harshness of judgment.

Tauler declares: "There is only one way to triumph over these obstacles: God would have to take complete possession of the interior of the soul and occupy it, which happens only to His true friends. He sent us His only Son in order that the holy life of the God-Man, His great and perfect virtue, examples, teachings, and multiple sufferings might lift us above ourselves, make us leave ourselves completely (draw us from this depth of egoism), and that we might let our own pallid light disappear in the true and essential light." [20]

"This light [of the Word made flesh] shines in the darkness, but the darkness did not comprehend it (John 1:5). None but the poor in spirit and those who are completely stripped of self, of self-love, and of their individual wills, receive this light. There are many who have been materially poor for forty years and who have never received the slightest [interior] ray of it. Through their senses and reason, they know thoroughly what is said of this light, but, in its essence, they have never tasted it; it is foreign to them and remains far from them." [21]

Again Tauler says: "It is thus that, whereas simple common folk followed our Lord, the Pharisees, the princes of the priests and the scribes, every class that had the appearance of sanctity, harshly opposed Him and ended by putting Him to death." [22] God is the grandeur of humble souls, and His very lofty ways remain hidden to our pride.

We see, consequently, to what extremities we may be led by this depth of egoism and pride which blinds us and hinders us from recognizing our sins. Therefore it is important that the light of life of living faith and of the gifts of the Holy Ghost should penetrate

30 *Ibid.,* pp. 249 f.
31 *Ibid.,* p. 253.
33 *Ibid.,* p. 252.

the depths of our intellect and, as it were, the root of our will.

That we may receive this light and these gifts, it is not sufficient to know the letter of the Gospel and adhere to it; we must assimilate its spirit profoundly. Otherwise, appearing as Christians and using the language of Christians, we would preserve in the depths of our being something which is not Christian and which resists the light of life. There would be in the depths of our intellect and will as it were a citadel which would serve as a refuge for self-love, which is unwilling to surrender and to allow the reign of God to be profoundly and eternally established in us. Thereby certain souls, that think themselves quite advanced but that do not recognize their defects, are in greater peril than the common run of men who admit that they are sinners and who preserve the fear of God.

Consequently we should meditate on Tauler's conclusion: "Therefore, well-beloved children, employ all your activity, both of soul and body, to obtain that this true light may shine in you in such a way that you may taste it. In this way you will be able to return to your origin, where the true light shines. Desire, ask, with nature and without nature,[23] that this grace may be granted to you. Employ all your energy to this end, pray to the friends of God that they may help you in this work; attach yourself to those who are attached to God in order that they may lead you to God with them. May this grace be granted to all of us, and may the all loving God help us! Amen." [24]

As a note in the translation which we have just quoted points out, Tauler draws a distinction here between the ordinary knowledge of faith, common to all the faithful, and mystical knowledge, the loving experience of God felt in the depths of the soul, which is reserved to the friends of God. Tauler invites all his hearers and readers to desire this intimate knowledge that transforms the center of the soul by illumining it, and that liberates it from this prison of egoism in which the soul had shut itself up. In this way alone can it be deified, divinized, by participating profoundly through grace in the inner fife of God.

All these defects, which still subsist in a measure in the depths of the intellect and will, even in the advanced, demand, therefore, a

[23] That is, as the translator points out, with or without the desire of your lower nature, which does not always thirst for God.

[24] *Ibid.,* p. 254.

purification that God alone can effect. "God alone can deify, as fire alone can ignite," St. Thomas says in substance.[25]

This passive purification will certainly not be without suffering, and, as St. John of the Cross teaches, it will even be a mystical death, the death to self, the disintegration of self-love, which until then has resisted grace, at times with great obstinacy. Here pride must receive the deathblow that it may give place to genuine humility, a virtue which has been compared to the deepest root of a tree, a root which buries itself so much the more deeply in the soil as the loftiest branch, the symbol of charity, rises higher toward the sky.

This center of the soul, the refuge of personal judgment and self-love that is often very subtle, must be illumined by the divine light and filled by God, rendered completely healthy, and vivified. On the feast of the Purification, at Mass and in the procession each person carries a lighted candle, the symbol of the light of life that each should bear in the innermost depths of his soul. This light of life was given to man on the first day of creation; extinguished by sin, it was rekindled by the grace of conversion and by the hope of the promised Redeemer. This light grew in the souls of the patriarchs and the prophets until the coming of Christ, "a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of . . . Israel," as the aged Simeon said in his beautiful canticle, *Nunc dimittis,* on the occasion of the presentation of Jesus in the Temple.

This same light of life, which grew in humanity until the advent of the Messias, should also grow in each of our souls from baptism until our entrance into heaven. It should gradually illumine and vivify the very center of our intellect and our heart that this depth may be not an obscure depth of egoism, personal judgment, and resistance to grace, but a depth of light and goodness where the Holy Ghost, the source of living water springing up into eternal life, may reign increasingly.

From what we have just said it is evident that the passive purification of the spirit, made necessary by the defects of proficients, is the decisive struggle between two spirits: the spirit of pride, which may grow even to blasphemy, to hatred of God, and despair, and that of humility and charity, which is eternal life begun in us. These

** *Summa,* la llae, q. 112, a. 1: "For it is as necessary that God alone should deify, bestowing a partaking of the divine nature by a participated likeness, as it is impossible that anything save fire should enkindle."

two conflicting spirits may be symbolized by two trees, one of which illustrates the teaching of St. Gregory the Great and St. Thomas on the roots and results of the seven capital sins, while the other explains their doctrine on humility and charity, and the connection of these virtues with the other virtues and the seven gifts.

We showed earlier in this work,[20] following these two great doctors, that from egoism or inordinate self-love is born,—together with the concupiscence of the flesh and that of the eyes,—pride, from which proceed especially four capital sins: vanity, acedia, envy, and anger. We have also seen that from the capital sins spring other defects and sins that are often still more serious; among them should be noted particularly blindness of spirit, discord, rancor, hardness of heart, blasphemy, hatred of God, and despair. The tree of evil with its accursed flowers and poisonous fruits symbolizes these sins.

In contradistinction, the tree of the virtues and of the gifts has for its root humility, a root which penetrates more and more deeply into the earth in order to draw nourishing secretions from it. The lower branches of this tree are the cardinal virtues with the connected virtues and the corresponding gifts; its higher branches are faith, hope, and charity, the last being the loftiest and most fruitful. To faith is attached the gift of understanding, and also that of knowledge, which greatly perfects hope by showing us the vanity of created things, the inefficacy of human helps for a divine end, and by leading us consequently to desire eternal life and to place our trust in God. To charity corresponds the gift of wisdom. From it principally proceeds contemplation; and from contemplation, actual union with God, which should become almost continuous, and also perfect abandonment.

That this tree of the virtues and of the gifts may reach its full development, there must be a definitive victory over the remains of intellectual and spiritual pride which subsist in proficients. Whence the necessity of the passive purification of the spirit in which, with an eminent help from the Holy Ghost, the soul makes heroic acts of the theological virtues to resist temptations contrary to these virtues.

*. Cf. *supra,* I, 299-322.

CHAPTER XXXV

Description of the Passive Purification of the Spirit

IN the preceding chapter we discussed the defects of proficients or the advanced, the remains of spiritual or intellectual pride found in them, and the absolute need of purification for the depth of the soul impregnated with self-love and subtle egoism. The Lord alone can effect this profound purification.

We purpose here to describe this purification so that it may not be confused either with sufferings springing only from melancholy or neurasthenia, or with the sensible aridity of beginners. Such a confusion would evidently be an unpardonable error.[1]

The Darkness in Which the Soul Has the Impression of Being

As the passive purification of the sensible part of the soul is manifested by the loss of the sensible consolations to which it was excessively attached, the passive purification of the spirit seems at first to consist in the deprivation of the lights previously received on the mysteries of faith. Having become too familiar, as it were, with them, the facility with which the soul considered them in prayer caused it to forget their infinite elevation; it thought of

[1] The progress of the knowledge and love of God, which characterizes this purification, is precisely what distinguishes it from sufferings that, in certain respects, resemble it, like those of neurasthenia. These latter may have nothing purifying about them, but they may also be borne for love of God and in a spirit of abandonment.

Likewise sufferings which are the result of a person's lack of virtue, of an undisciplined and at times exasperated sensibility, are not of themselves purifying, although a person may also accept them as a salutary humiliation, the result of his sins, and as a means of making reparation for them.

them in a manner somewhat too human. It dwelt, for example, a little too much on Christ's humanity, without living sufficiently by faith in His divinity; it attained as yet only the exterior aspects of the great mysteries of Providence, of the Incarnation, of the redemption, of the Mass, and of the life of the indefectible Church in the midst of continually recurring trials. The soul had still only a very superficial knowledge of these spiritual realities; its view of these mysteries was like that of a stained-glass window seen from without.

Then, what occurs? To lift the soul above this excessively inferior and superficial knowledge of divine things, the Lord detaches it from this way of thinking and praying and seems to strip it of its lights. In the words of St. John of the Cross: "God now denudes the faculties, the affections, and feelings, spiritual and sensual, interior and exterior, leaving the understanding in darkness, the will dry, the memory empty, the affections of the soul in the deepest affliction, bitterness, and distress; withholding from it the former sweetness it had in spiritual things." [2]

The sadness then experienced is very different from that which has its origin in neurasthenia, disillusions, or the contradictions of life. The chief difference is that the sadness of the passive purification of the spirit is accompanied by an ardent desire for God and perfection, by a persistent seeking after Him who alone can nourish the soul and vivify it. No longer only a sensible aridity, it is a dryness of the spiritual order, which springs, not from the deprivation of sensible consolations, but from the loss of the lights to which the soul was accustomed.

The soul should then walk "in the dark, in pure faith, which is the dark night of the natural faculties." [8] It can no longer easily apply itself to the consideration of our Savior's humanity; on the contrary, it is deprived of such consideration, as were the apostles immediately after Christ's ascension into heaven. During the months preceding the Ascension, their intimacy with Him had grown daily; it had become their life, and then one day He took final leave of them on this earth, thus depriving them of the sight of Him and of His encouraging words. They must have felt very much alone, as it were, isolated, especially while thinking of the difficulties of the

[2] *The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chap. j.
[8] *Ibid.,* chap. 4.

mission our Savior had entrusted to them: the evangelization of an impious world, plunged in all the errors of paganism. On the evening of Ascension Day, the apostles must have experienced the impression of profound solitude, similar to that of the desert and of death. We can get a slight idea of this solitude, when, after living on a higher plane during a fervent retreat under the direction of a priest who is closely united to God, we return to ordinary everyday life, which seems suddenly to deprive us of this plenitude. The same thing is true, and indeed much more so, after the death of a father, of a founder of an order, for those whom he leaves and who must continue his work. Thus after Christ's ascension, the apostles remained gazing toward heaven; their beloved Master had been taken from their gaze, and they felt alone in the face of all the sufferings to come.

They must then have recalled Christ's words: "I tell you the truth: it is expedient to you that I go. For if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." [4] "It is expedient to you that I go," that I deprive you of My sensible presence. In his commentary on St. John *(loc. cit.),* St. Thomas says: "The apostles were attached to the humanity of Christ, they did not rise sufficiently to the spiritual love of His divinity, and were not yet prepared to receive the Holy Ghost . . . who was to be given to them to console them and strengthen them in the midst of their tribulations."

This deprivation of the sensible presence of Christ's humanity which preceded the transformation of the apostles, effected on Pentecost, throws light on the state of darkness and desolation that we are discussing. It seems to the soul in this state that it enters a spiritual night, for it is deprived of the lights which hitherto illumined it; darkness descends as when the sun goes down.

The Revelation of the Majesty of God in This Darkness

But does the soul see nothing in this dark night? In the natural order when the sun has set and completely disappeared, at least some stars are visible, which convey an idea of the depth of the firmament. Hence at night we can see much farther than during

[4] John 16:7.

the day; true, hills or mountains, fifty or a hundred miles away, are no longer visible, but we can see stars and constellations which are thousands of leagues from the earth. The nearest star requires four and a half years to send us its light. The sun seems larger than the stars, although those of the first six magnitudes are far greater than it.

In this natural fact we have a sensible symbol of a lofty truth. When the soul enters the spiritual darkness we are speaking of, it no longer sees what is near it, but it has an increasingly better anticipatory apprehension of the infinite majesty and purity of God, although it does not see it, an apprehension superior to all the ideas that we of ourselves can have of Him; and, by contrast, it perceives much more clearly its own indigence and wretchedness.

Thus after the Ascension, the apostles, deprived of the presence of Christ's humanity, began to glimpse all the majesty of the Son of God. On Pentecost, Peter preached to the Jews with unshakable faith: "But the Author of life you killed, whom God hath raised from the dead." [8] "This [Jesus] is the stone which was rejected by you the builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other." [6]

Such is the lofty contemplation bom in the darkness of which we are speaking. When the sun has set, we see the stars in the depths of the firmament. But before enjoying the contemplation of the starry sky, we must become used to walking fearlessly in the night and triumphing over powerful temptations against faith and hope, just as, during the night of the senses, it was necessary to overcome many temptations against chastity and patience that have their seat in the sensible part of the soul.

We may profit by recalling the case of the holy Curé of Ars. His principal suffering sprang from the fact that he felt himself far from the ideal of the priesthood, whose grandeur appeared increasingly to him in the obscurity of faith, at the same time that he had an ever clearer understanding of the needs of the innumerable souls coming to him. The more he saw all the good that remained to be done, the less he saw what had already been accomplished; consequently he could not be complacent about it. His great suffering, which approached that of Jesus, Priest and Victim, and of Mary

®Acts 3:15.
• Acts 4:11 f.

at the foot of the cross, was that which comes from the sight of sin and from the loss of souls. This suffering presupposes a penetrating view which is nothing else than the contemplation of the infinite goodness of God, who is disregarded and outraged, and of the value of eternal life. This contemplation grows more and more in the dark night of faith which we are discussing.

St. Catherine of Siena pointed out in her *Dialogue* that the contemplation of our indigence and wretchedness and that of the infinite majesty and goodness of God are like the lowest and highest points of a circle that could grow forever. In reality, in this contemplation there is a contrast, a clear-cut opposition between two things which in an admirable manner mutually illumine each other.

In the life of Blessed Angela of Foligno we find a striking example of this fact, which she recounts as follows: "I see myself deprived of every good, of every virtue, filled with a multitude of vices; . . . in my soul I see only defects . . . false humility, pride, hypocrisy. . . . I would wish to cry out my iniquities to others. . . . God is hidden for me. . . . How can I hope in Him? . . . Though all the wise men of the world and all the saints of paradise were to overwhelm me with their consolations, they would bring me no relief, if God does not change me in the depths of my soul. This interior torment is far worse than martyrdom." [7] Then, recalling that God Himself was afflicted in Gethsemane, that during His passion He was scorned, buffeted, and tortured, she wished that her suffering might be increased still more, for it seemed to her a purifying suffering, which revealed to her the depths of the Passion. Some days later, on a road near Assisi, she heard these interior words: "O My daughter! I love thee more than any other person in this valley. . . . Thou hast prayed to My servant Francis, hoping to obtain with him and through him. Francis loved Me greatly, I did much in him; but if anyone loved Me more than Francis, I would do more for him. . . . I love with an immense love the soul that loves Me without falsehood. . . . Now, no one has any excuse, for all the world can love; God asks only love from the soul; for He Himself loves without falsehood, and is Himself the love of the soul." [8] Causing her to glimpse His passion, Jesus

[7] *Le Livre de ses visions et instructions,* chap. 19.
[8] *Ibid.,* chap. 20.

crucified added: "Look closely: dost thou find anything in Me which is not love?" 9

Another striking example of the spiritual night which we are speaking of is found in St. Paul of the Cross, the founder of the Passionists. We read in his *Letters:*

> Little corporal or spiritual tribulations are the first steps of this lofty and holy ladder which great and generous souls climb. They ascend step by step until they reach the last rung. There, at the summit, they find the purest suffering, without the slightest admixture of consolation coming from heaven or earth (the suffering which comes from offense offered to God). And if these souls are faithful in not seeking consolations, they will pass from this pure suffering to the pure love of God, without anything else being mingled with it. But rare are the souls which reach such a degree. . . .
>
> It seems to them that they are abandoned by God, that He no longer loves them, that He is irritated against them. . . . This is almost the pain of damnation, if I may express myself in this manner, a suffering, whose bitterness is comparable to no other. But if the soul is faithful, what treasures it amasses! The storms pass and go, the soul approaches true, very sweet, and very close union with Jesus crucified, who transforms it in Himself and reproduces His own features in it.10

These excerpts show that St. John of the Cross is not the only one who spoke profoundly of the night of the spirit because he had experienced it. Before him, Hugh of St. Victor had compared the passive purification of the soul by grace and the love of God to the transformation which green wood undergoes when attacked by fire: "The dampness is consumed, the smoke diminishes, the victorious flame shows itself; . . . finally it communicates its own nature to the wood, which is set completely on fire. Likewise the love of God gradually grows in the soul, the passions of the heart

• *Ibid.*

10 *Lettres,* I, 153. Cf. also Father Cajetan of the Holy Name of Mary, *Oraison et ascension mystique de saint Paul de la Croix* (Louvain, 1930), chap. 3, pp. 115, 175. "Forty-five years of desolation: apparent disappearance of the virtues of faith, hope, and charity. The saint believes himself abandoned by God. Patience and resignation to the will of God. The saint is drawn into the wounds of Jesus. Jesus on the cross says to him: 'You are in My heart.' The Passion is imprinted on his heart, and he is held for three hours in the side of Jesus."

St. Paul of the Cross not only traversed a tunnel, but he dug it in order to cause the religious of his Order to pass through it in their turn.

at first resist, which causes many sufferings and troubles; this thick smoke must be dissipated. Then the love of God becomes more ardent, its flame more lively . . . and finally it penetrates the entire soul. The divine truth is found and assimilated by contemplation; the soul, detached from self, no longer seeks anything but God. He is for it all in all; it rests in His love and finds therein joy and peace." 11

Speaking in like terms, Tauler says that the Holy Ghost creates a void in the depth of our souls where egoism and pride still dwell. He creates the void that He may heal us, and then He fills it to overflowing while continually increasing our capacity to receive.12

St. Teresa speaks of the passive purification of the spirit in the first chapter of the sixth mansion of *The Interior Castle.*

We read also in the life of St. Vincent de Paul that for four years he endured a trial of this type, which was marked by a persistent temptation against faith. The temptation was so strong that he wrote the *Credo* on a sheet of paper, which he carried over his heart and pressed from time to time to assure himself that he did not consent to the temptation.13

We should also keep in mind that St. John of the Cross, after Tauler, describes this state as it is in the saints in all its amplitude

11 *In Eccli.,* Hom. I.

12 Cf. Tauler, *Second Sermon for Pentecost.* See also the *Sermon for the Fifth Sunday after Trinity Sunday,* where he says: "Then there opens up a very deserted road, which is wholly somber and solitary. On this road God takes back all that He has given. Man is then so completely abandoned to himself that he no longer knows anything of God. He reaches a state of such anguish that he no longer knows whether he is on the right road . . . and this becomes so painful to him that this vast world seems too narrow to him. He has no longer any feeling of his God, he no longer knows anything about Him, and everything else displeases him. It is as if he were fastened between two walls, with a sword behind him and a sharp lance in front of him. Let him then sit down and say: 'Hail, O God, bitter bitterness full of all graces.' To love to excess and to be deprived of the good that one loves seems to him a more painful trial than hell, if hell were possible on earth. All that one can then say to this man consoles him as much as would a stone. Less than anything else, he does not wish anyone to talk to him about creatures. . . . Take courage! The Lord is surely very near. Rest on the trunk of a very living true faith: soon all will go exceedingly well." This is the night and the profound emptiness which prepare the true deification of the soul. Elsewhere Tauler compares this state to that of a ship which has lost its sails and masts in a storm.

13 Cf. Abclly, *Vie de saint Vincent de Paul,* Bk. Ill, chap, **n,** sect. 1, pp. 164-68. Cf. *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique,* 1932, ρρ· 398 ff.

and intensity, such as he himself must have undergone it. But this purification is found in lesser degrees and under less purely contemplative forms, united, for example, to the great trials met with in the apostolate.

If the passive purification of the spirit seems extraordinary to us, outside the normal way of sanctity, this is because we do not give enough thought to what a profound purification of the soul is necessary to receive immediately eternal life, the beatific vision of the divine essence, without having to pass through purgatory or after having done so. And when we read the exposition of this doctrine in the great masters, we read it perhaps through a certain curiosity about divine things, but without a sufficiently sincere desire for our own sanctification. If we had this desire, we would find in these pages what is suitable for us, we would see there the one thing necessary.

We must in one way or another pass through this crucible in order to have a concept of our Savior's passion, of the humility of Jesus and His love for us, that will not be only a confused concept, or only a theoretically distinct concept, but an experimental concept, without which there is no love of the cross or true sanctity.

We must tell ourselves that the world is full of crosses that have unfortunately been lost like that of the bad thief. God grant that our sufferings may not be fruitless and that our crosses may resemble that of the good thief, which served as a reparation for his sins. May our crosses resemble even more closely the cross of Jesus and configure us to Him. Sanctifying grace, as it grows, makes us more and more like to God; inasmuch as it is Christian grace, it assimilates us to Christ crucified, and should make us grow more like Him until our entrance into heaven. It should mark us with the likeness of our Savior who died for love of us.

We must also take into account the inequality between souls and between their means. We must ask of souls only what they can give: of some, a continuous upward surge of heroism; of others, little steps, which bring them ever nearer the end to be attained. But, to be configured to Christ, every soul must sacrifice itself under some form or other.

CHAPTER XXXVI

The Cause of the Passive Purification of the Spirit

HAVING described in the preceding chapter the passive purification of the spirit as it appears especially in the interior lives of the great servants of God, we shall now explain this spiritual state theologically by determining its cause. We have seen that it consists chiefly in a profound experiential knowledge of our indigence and wretchedness and, by contrast, of the infinite majesty of God, a knowledge which is accompanied by great spiritual aridity and a lively desire for perfection. What can be the cause of this obscure and painful contemplation?

St. John of the Cross [1] answers, as theology must do, by invoking Holy Scripture, which speaks to us in a number of passages of a purifying light, a spiritual fire that rids the soul of its stains.

Purifying Infused Light and Spiritual Fire

The Book of Wisdom says of the just: "As gold in the furnace He hath proved them, and as a victim of a holocaust He hath received them." [2] Gold in the crucible is purified by material fire; a still more intense fire is needed to transform coal into a diamond; likewise, in tribulation the soul of the just man is purified by a spiritual fire. Scripture often insists on this thought, telling us that God is a fire which gradually consumes whatever hinders His reign in souls.[3]

Jeremias writes in his Lamentations: "From above He hath sent fire into my bones. . . . He hath made me desolate, wasted with

[1] *The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chap. j.
[2] Wisd. j:6.
[3] Deut. 4:24.

sorrow all the day long."[4] In the light of this spiritual fire, which is in him, the prophet sees far more clearly the sins of Israel, the justice and goodness of God, and he prays earnestly to Him for the salvation of sinners.

The Psalmist says likewise: "Who can understand sins? From my secret ones cleanse me, O Lord."[5] "My substance is as nothing before Thee."[6] "O my God, enlighten my darkness."[7] "Create a clean heart in me, O God."[8] Thus, like a flash of lightning, the Holy Ghost illumines the soul He wishes to purify. He says at times to the soul: "Do you wish to be purified?" And if the reply is what it ought to be, a profound work begins in it; divine truth is given to the soul to deliver it from the depth of self-love that still so often deludes it. "If you continue in My word," says Christ, "you shall be My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."[9] If anyone lives seriously by the words of Christ, correcting himself, the first Truth will gradually penetrate into his soul and deliver it from that most pernicious of lies, the lie that a person tells himself while cherishing his illusions.

We can never too strongly desire this purifying light which Scripture speaks of. Unfortunately we often flee from it, because we are afraid we may be told the truth about ourselves, when we so greatly love to tell others the truth about themselves.

St. John of the Cross simply explains the nature of the purifying light spoken of in Scripture, when he writes: "The dark night is a certain inflowing of God into the soul which cleanses it of its ignorances and imperfections, habitual, natural, and spiritual. Contemplatives call it infused contemplation, or mystical theology, whereby God secretly teaches the soul and instructs it in the perfection of love, without efforts on its own part beyond a loving attention to God, listening to His voice and admitting the light He sends, but without understanding how this is infused contemplation."[10] In the life of the holy Curé of Ars we have a striking example of this state. Comprehending better every day the lofti-

[4] Lam. i:ij.
[5] Ps. 18:13.
[6] Ps. 38:6.
[7] Ps. 17:29.
[8] Ps. 50:12.
[9] John 8:31 f.
[10] *The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chap. j.

ness of the priestly ideal and judging himself to be farther than ever from it, he certainly did not think then that he was a contemplative, and yet it was God Himself who was enlightening him and instructing him in this way.

Among the comparisons used to explain more clearly the spiritual state we are speaking of is one by Hugh of St. Victor,[11] which St. John of the Cross reproduces as follows: "This purgative and loving knowledge, or divine light, . . . is to the soul which it is purifying in order to unite it perfectly to itself,[12] as fire is to fuel which it is transforming into itself. The first action of material fire on fuel is to dry it, to expel from it all water and all moisture. It blackens it at once and soils it, and drying it little by little, makes it light and consumes all its foulness and blackness which are contrary to itself. Finally, having heated and set on fire its outward surface, it transforms the whole into itself, and makes it beautiful as itself. . . . It is in this way we have to reason about the divine fire of contemplative love which, before it unites with, and transforms the soul into itself, purges away all its contrary qualities. It expels its impurities, blackens it and obscures it, and thus its condition is apparently worse than it was before. For while the divine purgation is removing all the evil and vicious humors, . . . the soul—though not worse in itself, nor in the sight of God—seeing at last what it never saw before, looks upon itself not only as unworthy of His regard, but even as a loathsome object and that God does loathe it." [13]

This salutary crisis is a purgatory before death, in which the soul is purified under the influence, not of a sensible fire, but of the spiritual fire of contemplation and love. "And thus," says St. John of the Cross, "the soul which passes through this state in the present life, and is perfectly purified, either enters not into purgatory, or is detained there but a moment, for one hour here is of greater moment than many there." [14] The reason is that on earth man is purified while meriting and growing greatly at times in charity, whereas after death he is purified without meriting. And as purgatory is a penalty and every penalty presupposes a sin that could have been avoided, the normal way of sanctity is to undergo the

[11] *In Eccli.,* Hom. I.

[12] It is clearly a question here, as we see, of what prepares the soul to enter the unitive way.

[13] *The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chap. 10.

[14] *Ibid.,* chap. 6.

passive purifications of which we are speaking before death and not after death. In reality, however, rare are they who go immediately from earth to heaven, without passing through purgatory. The true order of Christian life is fully realized only in the saints.

Is the purifying light, which we have just spoken of, only that of living faith, or also that of one of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, present in all the just? If we consider the characteristics of the gift of understanding, we see that it is chiefly this gift which intervenes in this state.

The Influence of the Gift of Understanding in This Purification

St. John of the Cross offers the following explanation: "Because the soul is to attain to the possession of a certain sense and divine knowledge, most generous and full of sweetness, of all human and divine things which do not fall within the common-sense and natural perceptions of the soul, it views them with different eyes now; as the light and grace of the Holy Ghost differ from those of sense, the divine from the human. . . . For this night is drawing the spirit away from its ordinary and common sense of things, that it may draw it toward the divine sense, which is a stranger and an alien to all human ways; so much so that the soul seems to be carried out of itself." [18]

This teaching of St. John of the Cross receives additional light from what St. Thomas says about the gift of understanding and the new penetration and purification of which it is the principle. According to St. Thomas: "The stronger the light of the understanding, the further can it penetrate into the heart of things. Now the natural light of our understanding (even in the greatest geniuses) is of finite power; wherefore it can reach to a certain fixed point. Consequently man needs a supernatural light in order to penetrate further still (into God or into the depths of the life of the soul) so as to know what it cannot know by its natural light: and this supernatural light which is bestowed on man is called the gift of understanding." [18] "Wherefore this addition is not called reason but understanding, since the additional light is in comparison with what

[18] *Ibid.,* chap. 9.
Summa, IIa IIae, q.8, a. 1.

we know supernaturally, what the natural light is in regard to those things we know from the first." [17]

This gift presupposes faith united to charity and perfects it. Living faith makes us firmly adhere to the divine mysteries because God has revealed them, but of itself alone it does not yet make us penetrate the profound meaning of the mysteries, of the majesty of God, the Incarnation, the redemption, the humiliations of Christ dying for love of us. The penetration that we are here speaking of is not that which comes from study, from theological labor; it proceeds from a special illumination of the Holy Ghost, which, not abstractly and theoretically, but vitally, concretely, and practically, goes farther, higher, and deeper than study. Through the gift of understanding we receive this penetrating illumination with docility. It prevents us, first of all, from confusing the true meaning of the word of God with the erroneous interpretations sometimes given of it. This gift shows us in an instant tfie inanity of the objections raised by an evil spirit, so wholly different from the spirit of God. Error then creates the impression of a false discordant note in a symphony; though unable to refute it theologically, we see that it is an error. Likewise the gift of understanding empfiasizes the immense distance separating spiritual realities from sensible symbols, or the spirit from the flesh.[18] Similarly it dispels the confusion between sensible consolations and spiritual tastes, which are far more elevated and more sure, as St. Teresa pointed out.[19]

Not only does the gift of understanding remove error, but it positively makes man penetrate vitally the truths of religion which are accessible to reason, such as the existence of God, the sovereign freedom of the Creator, and His providence; [20] but principally it makes him penetrate the meaning of the supernatural mysteries inaccessible to reason, what St. Paul calls "the deep things of God." [21] It cannot give us here on earth the evidence of these mysteries, but, in the obscurity of faith, it manifests to us their deep meaning, so difficult to express in human speech. It thus shows us the majesty of

17 *Ibid.,* ad ium.

™ *Summa,* Ila Ilae, q.8, a.z: "We know that whatever be the outward appearances, they do not contradict the truth." Cf. *ibid.,* a. 8.

x· *The Interior Castle,* fourth mansion, chap. z.

taSumma, Ila Ilae, q.8, a.z.

11 Cf. I Cor. zîio: "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

God, of His wisdom, justice, power, and paternity in relation to the Word and to us. It gives us, for example, a more profound understanding of the mystery of the redemption by making us understand St. Paul's words: "Christ Jesus . . . emptied Himself. . . . He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross." [22]

The gift of understanding is thus both speculative and practical, as St. Thomas says.[23] It reminds us of the sovereign importance of the precept of love. In times of strong temptation, for example, to discouragement or even despair, it shows us as it were in a lightning flash the value of eternal life, the loftiness of our last end.[24] Thus by the penetration it brings, this gift removes dullness of mind;[26] it shows us our culpability far better than the most attentive examination of conscience; it reveals to us our indigence, our poverty, our wretchedness, and by contrast the eminence of God.

Therefore we see how, as St. Augustine and St. Thomas say, it corresponds to the beatitude: "Blessed are the clean of heart." In fact, it purifies our intellect of speculative and practical errors, of attachment to sensible images; it makes us perceive, though indistinctly, that God is infinitely superior to all created goods, that the Deity or divine essence, which the blessed contemplate immediately, is superior to all the analogical ideas that we can form of it.[20] We thus perceive that the Deity, which will appear unveiled only in heaven, is to our ideas of the divine perfections somewhat as white light is to the seven colors of the rainbow which come from it. A man who has never seen whiteness, but only the colors which come from it, cannot say positively what white is. Just so, we cannot say what the inner life of God is. *"Nescimus de Deo quid est,"* St. Thomas often says. The Deity as such, in which we share only by grace, is superior to all the naturally knowable and participable perfections which it contains formally and eminently; it is superior to being, to unity, to truth, to goodness, to understanding, to love.[27] It is the Deity, which we cannot know in its

22 Phil. 2:7 f.
23 *Summa,* IIa IIae, q. 8, a. 3.
21 *Ibid.,* ad 211m.
28 *Ibid.,* a. 8 ad lum.
28 *Ibid.,* a. 8.
Summa, la, q. 13, a. 1: "God can be named by us from creatures, never-

essence as long as we are on earth; that is why great mystics, like Angela of Foligno, have called it "the great darkness."[22] But this great darkness is nothing else than the transluminous obscurity, or, as St. Paul says, "the light inaccessible"[23] in which God dwells.

Thus we see why the purifying light of the gift of understanding gives the impression of darkness; it makes us enter on a higher plane into the obscurity of the supernatural, the divine mystery, which is the direct opposite of the obscurity on the lower plane on which we are affected by the condition of material things, by inordinate passions, by sin and error.

We can also understand why St. Thomas tells us that the gift of understanding confirms the supernatural certitude of faith by making us penetrate mysteries and by dispelling error.[24] Thus contemplation, which exists in the state of darkness we are speaking of, proceeds from living faith as from its radical principle, and from the gift of understanding as from its proximate principle. The gift of knowledge also often concurs in it by revealing to us more in detail our poverty, culpability, and wretchedness.[25]

The spiritual aridity found in this state shows that the gift of wisdom does not exert a notable influence in it, for this gift makes us relish divine things and thus brings us great spiritual consolation and profound peace.[26]

The penetration, which, in this state, comes from the gift of understanding, differs from this relish of the divine mysteries. The

theless not so as to express by the name what belongs to the divine Essence in Itself." Cf. Cajetan, on la, q. 39, a. 1, no. 7: "The Deity is before all in its being and in all its attributes, for it is above being and above unity, etc." Being and unity, like understanding and love, are naturally capable of being shared; it is thus that we can naturally know these divine perfections. The Deity as such can only be shared in supematurally by sanctifying grace, which is defined as "a participation in the Deity or the divine nature.

22 *Le Livre des visions et des instructions,* chap. 26: "I see nothing and I see all; the more this infinite good is seen in the darkness, the more certain it is that it exceeds all."

23 Cf. I Tim. 0:16.

24 *Summa,* Ila Ilae, q.8, a. 8.

25 *Ibid.,* q.9, a.4 ad turn: "To the gift of knowledge there corresponds sorrow for past errors." The gift of knowledge, says St. Augustine, corresponds to the beatitude of the tears of contrition, for it shows the emptiness of creatures and the gravity of sin which turns us away from God.

** *Summa,* Ila Ilae, q.4j, a. a, 6.

proof of it is that he who in this way penetrates or comprehends increasingly the majesty of God, feels that he is alienated from Him because of the contrast between God's majesty and his own indigence.[83] Later, at the end of the purification of the spirit, he will taste profoundly the presence of the Blessed Trinity in his soul, he will have a quasi-experimental knowledge of it, which was, as it were, sketched before the night of the spirit, and which, after this night, will appear in its plenitude in the transforming union.

St. John of the Cross describes the passive purification of the spirit as it is realized in great saints, but, all proportion being kept, it should exist in every servant of God that his higher faculties may be truly purified to their depths, either on earth or after death in purgatory, since nothing unclean can enter heaven. Moreover, the proximate principle of this purification, the penetrating light of the gift of understanding, exists in all the just. For this reason Christ says to all: "Blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear," that you may grasp the spirit under the letter, the divine reality under figures, symbols, or parables. Blessed are they who thus distinguish between the spirit of God and a human wisdom that would lead them astray.

It remains for us to explain more fully the reasons why the purifying light of the gift of understanding creates the impression of darkness during the passive purification of the spirit. We shall thus see more clearly how this higher obscurity differs from the lower. In many supernatural facts more or less disconcerting to human reason, such as the passion of Christ, there is an enigma in which some are inclined to see darkness from the lower level of their illusions and pride; others discover the darkness from the higher level, that of God's inner life and of the mysteries of His grace. We need only recall the first controversies over the apparitions of Our Lady of Lourdes to Bernadette. The confusion of these two darknesses is that of two extremes infinitely distant one from the other, between which we have to walk. More than that, we must continually lift ourselves out of the darkness of the lower plane to penetrate more and more into the darkness of that higher plane, which is the inaccessible light in which God dwells. The night of

*. There is here a painful presence of God.

the spirit thus appears as the normal prelude of eternal life and as its painful germination in us.[34]

On the description and explanation of the night of the spirit, cf. *Etudes Carmélitaines,* October, 1938: Louis of the Trinity, C.D., "L'obscure nuit du feu d'amour," pp. 7-32; H. C. Puech, "La ténèbre mystique chez le Pseudo-Denys et dans la tradition patristique," pp. 33-53; G. Théry, O.P., "Denys au Moyen-Age, l'aube de la *Nuit obscure,"* pp. 68-74; L. Reypens, S.J., "La nuit de l'esprit chez Ruysbroec," pp. 75-81; B. M. Lavaud, O.P., "L'angoisse spirituelle selon Jean Tauler," pp. 82-91; Father Debongnie, C.SS.R., "Le *purgatoire* de Catherine de Gênes," pp. 92-101; J. Maritain, "L'expérience mystique naturelle et le vide," pp. 116-39; Lucian Mary of St. Joseph, C.D., "A la recherche d'une structure essentielle de la Nuit de l'esprit," pp. 254-81.

CHAPTER XXXVII

The Transluminous Obscurity

WE have seen that the spiritual light of the gift of understanding, which is given to the soul in the passive purification of the spirit, enlightens it regarding the infinite majesty of God on the one hand, and, by contrast, regarding its own poverty and wretchedness.

Our problem now is why this infused purifying light manifests itself as darkness. Why does it give the impression of a great darkness and why does it at times cause great suffering?

There are three reasons for it, which are pointed out by St. John of the Cross and more readily understood with the help of the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas. A great light gives the impression of darkness because of its very strength and of the elevation of its object. Moreover, it makes us suffer because of our impurity and weakness, which we feel more keenly under certain temptations of the devil that occur in this period.

The Effect of Too Great a Light

First of all, St. John of the Cross, following Dionysius and the great theologians, says: "The divine wisdom is so high that it transcends the capacity of the soul, and therefore is, in that respect, darkness," [1] because we comprehend with increasing clarity that the divine Essence or the Deity surpasses all the ideas we can have of it, ideas of being, truth, goodness, intelligence, and love; it contains them all in an eminence inaccessible to us, which essentially is sovereignly luminous, but which seems dark to us because we

1 *The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chap. j.

cannot attain it? This "inaccessible light" [8] in which God dwells is for us the great darkness. Thus the light of the sun seems dark to the eye of the owl, which can bear and attain only the dim light of twilight or dawn. Aristotle pointed this out,[4] and Dionysius the Mystic likewise says that contemplation is like "a ray of darkness."

Consequently what seems clear to us in God, as His existence and the existence of His providence, is what we grasp of it in the mirror of sensible things, in the dim light within our reach. But the intimate harmonization of infinite justice, infinite mercy, and supreme liberty in the mystery of predestination seems very obscure to us, although this intimate harmonization may be intrinsically very luminous. Souls passing through the dark night of the spirit are consequently often tempted on the subject of the mystery of predestination; and in this trial they cannot dwell on the excessively human and seemingly clearer conceptions of this mystery.[6] They would feel as if they were descending instead of ascending. They must rise above the temptation by turning, through a great act of faith, toward the superior obscurity of the intimate life of God, of the Deity, in which harmonize infinite justice, infinite mercy, and the supreme liberty of the Most High.

[a] In his *Treatise on the Love of God* (Bk. II, chap. 1), St. Francis de Sales says on this subject: "When the rising sun is red . . . , or when the setting sun is wan, pale, gray, we say that it is a sign of rain. Théotime, the sun is neither red, nor black, nor pale, nor gray, nor green. This great luminary is not at all subject to these vicissitudes and changes of color, having for its sole color only its very clear and perpetual light. . . . But we speak in this way because it seems so to us, according to the variety of the vapors which are between it and our eyes, which make it appear in different manners. Now we discourse thus of God: not so much according to what He is in Himself, as according to His works by the mediation of which we contemplate Him. . . . There is in God only one perfection, which comprises all the others in an infinitely excellent and eminent manner which our spirit cannot think of."

• Cf. I Tim. *6:16.*

• He said that divine things are so much the more obscure for us as they of themselves are more intelligible and luminous, because they are the farthest removed from the senses. Cf. *Metaph.,* Bk. II, chap. 1.

In reality, this affirmation, "the sun exists," is clearer for us than the statement, "God exists." Nevertheless, of Himself, God alone is subsistent Being, God alone is He who is, and the light of the sun is only a shadow compared with the divine light.

Time seems clearer to us than eternity, and yet the fleeting instant of itself is far less intelligible than the immutable instant, the single instant of immobile eternity.

• For example, they can hardly dwell on Molina's conception.

The Blessed Trinity also, which is Light itself, seems obscure to us because too luminous for the weak eyes of our spirit. For this reason St. Teresa says: "I have more devotion to the mysteries of faith in proportion as they are more obscure; because I know that this obscurity comes from a light too great for our weak understanding." Christ's passion, which was the darkest and most disconcerting period for the apostles, was that of Christ's greatest victory over sin and the devil.®

The Effect of Light on Weak Eyes

Furthermore, the divine light, given in the night of the spirit, causes suffering because of the impurity still existing in the soul. St. Augustine pointed this out, saying: "The light which so greatly pleases pure eyes is hateful to weak ones." This is so much truer when this divine light must overcome a special resistance of the soul, which is unwilling to be enlightened in regard to certain of its defects, wishing at times to see virtues in them: for example, in regard to a somewhat bitter zeal and a secret complacency, as a result of which it is deceived by its self-love and by the enemy of the good. "The light shineth in darkness," says St. John, "and the [inferior] darkness did not comprehend it." 7 This light seems pain-

e The dark hours of Christ's passion enlighten the saints. Likewise, as St. John of the Cross points out *(The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chap. 8): "The ray of high contemplation, transcending as it does the natural powers, striking the soul with its divine light, makes it dark, and deprives it of all the natural affections and apprehensions which it previously entertained in its own natural light." Thus the lower part of the soul is darkened, while the higher part is gradually illumined and "the spiritual light, which beats on the soul is of itself neither visible nor perceptible because it is so clear; but when it beats upon anything that reflects it, that is, upon any matter of perfection which presents itself to the understanding or a decision to be made as to the truth or falsehood of anything, the soul sees it at once, and understands the matter more clearly than it ever did before it entered into this darkness" *(ibid).*

We knew a contemplative lay sister who had no human culture whatsoever, but who was very spiritual as a result of interior trials; she was as if consumed. She had found two great friends among the saints: St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Albert the Great. She, who had absolutely no philosophical or theological training, loved to read how these great saints prayed and she often directed her prayers to them saying: "They are great doctors of the Church, they enlighten souls that ask them to do so." As a matter of fact, St. Thomas showed her where the dark tunnel through which she was passing was to lead her. We have frequently observed that St. Thomas has often thus enlightened tried souls that call upon him.

7 John 1:5.

ful when it must overcome resistance, especially a prolonged resistance.

It even happens often that the soul suffers greatly because it cannot understand why God tries it in this way, as if He were an implacable judge. As a result, it has difficulty in believing practically in His goodness; and when someone speaks of the goodness of God, it seems abstract and theoretical to the soul at a time when in its opinion it needs to experience this goodness by a little consolation.

The Fear of Consenting or of Having Consented to Temptations

This interior suffering increases still more through the fear of consenting to temptations arising at this time against faith, hope, and the love of God and of neighbor. Holy Job experienced this fear, and so did the apostles during the Passion and after the Ascension, when Christ had departed from them and left them alone.

In this painful state, the soul sees clearly that at times it resists these temptations, but at others it fears that it consented. This fear causes it anguish, for in this state the soul already greatly loves the Lord and would not for anything in the world offend His majesty or slight His goodness.[•]

We have here the explanation of the fact that, whereas at the summit of the spirit there is an act of faith illumined by the gift of understanding, a direct and very simple, though unperceived, act of arid contemplation, at the same time the just man is inclined by his lower reason to conclude that he is abandoned by God. This was the case with St. Paul of the Cross when he exclaimed in the streets of Rome: *"A via Pauli, libera nos Domine";* also with St. Alphonsus Liguori, who believed that the Order which he had founded was going to perish; with Father Surin in his desolations, from which he emerged occasionally to preach, out of charity, an admirable sermon springing from the depths of his tormented faith, which was daily growing in this struggle. At this stage there is in

• In *The Dark Night* (Bk. II, chap. 5), St. John of the Cross says on this subject: "The soul, by reason of its impurity, suffers exceedingly when the divine light shines upon it. And when the rays of this pure light strike upon the soul, in order to expel its impurities, the soul perceives itself to be so unclean and miserable that it seems as if God had set Himself against it, and itself were set against God."

• Cf. *The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chaps. 5 f.

tried souls, as in those of purgatory, a flux and reflux; carried toward God by the impulse of their love, they feel themselves repulsed by all the wretchedness and pusillanimity which they see in themselves.

As a rule, the director can bring no consolation to the soul thus afflicted, says St. John of the Cross.[10] He speaks to it of the glorious end of this trial, of the soft light that will be met with again on leaving this tunnel, but the soul, immersed in suffering, cannot understand these words. It cannot receive consolation by this human and discursive way, but only through a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost and through very simple direct acts which He excites in it. For this reason Father de Caussade says with his usual charm: "Souls walking in the light sing hymns of light; those walking in the darkness sing canticles of darkness. We must let both classes sing even to the end the part and the motet that God assigns to them. We must put nothing into what He is filling; we must let all the drops of this gall of divine bitterness flow, though it should inebriate. Jeremias and Ezechiel acted in this manner. . . . The spirit which renders desolate, alone can console. These different waters flow from the same source." [11]

Scripture states several times: "The Lord . . . bringeth down to hell and bringeth back again. The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich, He humbleth and He exalteth." [12] This statement is verified especially in the night of the spirit, which is the mystical death; it prepares the soul for the intimacy of union with God. The soul empty of all self-love can reach absolute sincerity; every mask drops away. The soul no longer possesses anything of its own, but is ready to possess God, like the apostles, of whom it was said: "As having nothing, and possessing all things." [13] The emptiness that it experiences renders it still more eager for God.

Confirmations

The doctrine just set forth is confirmed in several ways. First of all, it is confirmed by the dogma of purgatory. Nothing unclean

[10] *Ibid.,* chap. 7.

[11] *L'Abandon à la Providence divine,* abridged ed., Bk. Ill, chap. 3; complete ed., Bk. II, chap. 4, par. *1.*

[12] Cf. I Kings *2:6* f.; Deut. 32:39; Tob. 13:12; Wisd. 16:13.

[13] Cf. II Cor. 6:10.

can enter heaven; therefore the purification of the spirit, which we are speaking of, must be undergone before or after death. However, it is far better and more profitable to undergo it before death; for in the present life man merits while growing in charity, whereas in purgatory he no longer merits. It is far better to be purified by the spiritual fire of growing infused love than by another inferior fire. In this connection, it will be profitable to read what St. Catherine of Genoa says in her *Treatise on Purgatory* about the purification in the next world.

St. John of the Cross points out an additional confirmation: "For the light of God that illumines an angel enlightens him and sets him on fire with love, for he is a spirit already prepared for the infusion of that light; but man, being impure and weak, is ordinarily enlightened . . . in darkness, in distress, and pain—the sun's rays are painful in their light to weak eyes." [14]

When we receive this divine illumination, we are not as a rule conscious that God is enlightening us; nevertheless, some words of the Gospel on mercy or justice are illumined for us. This is a sign that we have received a grace of light.

We find a third confirmation of what we have said in the analogy of night in nature, a symbol that enables us to understand a little the state of purification, called the night of the spirit. In nature, when the sun goes down and night falls, we no longer see the objects surrounding us, but we do see distant objects not visible during the day, such as the stars, which are thousands of leagues away. And the sun must hide that we may see them, that we may be able to glimpse the depths of the firmament. Analogously, during the night of the spirit we see much farther than during the luminous period preceding it; these inferior lights must be taken away from us in order that we may begin to see the heights of the spiritual firmament.[18] This is why Christ said to His apostles: "It is expedient to

[14] *The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chap. 12.

Summa, IIa IIae, q. 180, a.6. In this article St. Thomas alludes to this matter when he explains how the spirit rises from the straight movement of contemplation (which starts with sensible things) to the oblique movement, then to the circular movement, similar to that of the eagle which, high up in the sky, describes a circle several times while contemplating the sun and the horizon. He says (ad jum): "But on the part of the soul, ere it arrive at this uniformity (in which it contemplates with a single gaze God and the radiation of His goodness) its twofold lack of uniformity needs to be removed. First, that which arises from the variety of external things. . . . Another

you that I go. For if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." [16] As a matter of fact, when the apostles could no longer see Christ's humanity, they began to glimpse the grandeur of His divinity. They were so well enlightened and fortified that on Pentecost the Apostle Peter preached to all who were in the temple at Jerusalem, saying: "But the Author of life you killed, whom God hath raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses." [17] "Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved." [18] Peter's preaching sprang from the plenitude of the contemplation of the mystery of Christ. St. Thomas says it must be so in order that preaching may be living and profound,[19] a condition that is fully realized only after the purification of the spirit.

What St. John of the Cross says, Tauler has pointed out several times in his sermons, for example, in the sermon for the Second Sunday of Lent.[20] According to Tauler, the tried soul, which at first seems to pray in vain, like the woman of Canaan, is, however, as if pursued by God:

> This divine pursuit provokes in the soul an appealing cry of immense force; . . . it is a sigh coming from a measureless depth. This desire of the soul far exceeds nature; it is the Holy Ghost Himself who must utter this sigh in us, as St. Paul says: "The Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings." . . . But God acts then as if He heard absolutely nothing, . . . as Christ seemed at first not to wish to hear the prayer of the woman of Canaan, saying to her: "I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel. . . . It is not good to take the bread of the children and to cast it to the dogs." . . . Humbling herself then she replied with great confidence: "Yea, Lord; for the whelps

lack of uniformity requires to be removed from the soul, and this is owing to the discoursing of reason. This is done by directing all the soul's operations to the simple contemplation of the intelligible truth, to the *simplex intuitus veritatis.*'" This double sacrifice of the senses and discursive reasoning is only made slowly in prayer, and gradually the understanding reaches the point of judging spiritually of all things, according to St. Paul's words: "But the spiritual man judgeth all things. . . . For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him?" (I Cor. a:ij f.).

xeJohn 16:7.

1T Acts 3:13.

18 Acts 4:11.

19 Summa, Ila Ilae, q. 188, a.6: "Teaching and preaching proceed from the fullness of contemplation."

so Sermons (Trans. Hugueny), I, 241 ff.

also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their master." . . . That is why Jesus answered her: "O woman, great is thy faith: be it done to thee as thou wilt." In truth, this is the answer that will be made to all those who will be found in such dispositions (of profound humility and confidence) on this road. All that you wish will happen to you and in the way you wish it, for "in the measure in which you have gone forth from what is yours," says the Lord, "in this measure you are to share in what is Mine." . . . In proportion as a man renounces himself and goes out of himself, in the same proportion God enters into him in very truth. . . . Take the last place, as the Gospel says, and you will be lifted up. But those who exalt themselves will be put down. Desire only what God has willed from all eternity; accept the place which in His most amiable will He has decided should be yours. My children, it is by complete renunciation of self and of all that one possesses that one goes to God. One drop of this renunciation, one rill of it, would better prepare a man and lead him nearer to God than the most absolute exterior denudation. . . . A short moment lived in these dispositions would be more useful for us than forty years following practices of our own choice.

In this sermon Tauler speaks forcibly of the one thing necessary. The grace of denudation in question here fulfills profoundly the words of the Gospel: "Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." [21] Blessed is the death that is followed by such a spiritual resurrection.[22]

[21] John 12:24 f.

[22] Cf. St. Catherine of Genoa, *Treatise on Purgatory.* See also *Diet, de spiritualité,* "Catherine de Gênes," col. 304-308; "The Saint describes the state of the suffering souls by comparison with her own state, that of a soul which God causes to pass through the passive purifications. This explains why she insists so strongly on certain characteristics, especially on the laceration produced in the soul by the effect of two contrary forces: one force which draws it toward God, the object of beatitude; another force which repulses it: the opposition between the purity of God and its own imperfection." She describes the insatiable hunger for the Divinity, and says that the souls in purgatory suffer a pain so great that no intellect can, in the present life, comprehend it. She holds also that this suffering increases with the Progress of the purification, for the desire for God grows; and yet there is a oly ioy which also grows, for the soul makes more account of the divine will than of its own suffering. God removes every root of egoism by producing in the soul "the last act of love by which He completes its purification" *(Purg.,* chap. 11). Purgatory ceases to be a prison imposed on the soul and becomes a prison desired, wished for, anxiously sought for *(Purg.,* chap. 18). This entire article in the *Diet, de spir.* on St. Catherine of Genoa is of great interest. See also how she conceived of the purgative, the illuminative, and the unitive ways.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Conduct to Be Observed during the Purification of the Spirit

AFTER describing the period of passive purification that should ^introduce the soul into the unitive way of the perfect, we explained this purification by the purifying light, which is chiefly that of the gift of understanding, in which we contemplate the majesty of God and our poverty, not to mention our wretchedness. We shall now give rules of direction for souls in this state of prolonged aridity, which is sometimes so painful.

Generous Acceptance

There is, first of all, a general rule. These afflicted souls should be treated with kindness and helped that they may be led to full conformity to the divine will. The first rule of direction is that these souls should accept this trial generously for as long a time as, according to the good pleasure of God, it may last, and they should live in abandonment to the divine will. Moreover, as a general rule, the more generously they accept this purification, the quicker it will end, since the effect for which God wills it, will be more promptly accomplished. If it is more intense, it will generally be shorter (like the purification of purgatory) unless the soul is to suffer specially for sinners, over and above its personal purification.

Excellent books have been written on abandonment to Providence in this period of the spiritual life. Besides *The Dark Night* (Bk. II) of St. John of the Cross, there is the *Treatise on The Love of God* (Bk. IX) of St. Francis de Sales on the love of submission and of holy indifference in spiritual afflictions.[1] In the seventeenth

1 Cf. chaps. 3-6, 13—16.

century, Father A. Piny, O.P., wrote *Le plus parfait,* or the way of abandonment to the will of God, and also *L'Etat du pur amour.* In the same period we find *Les saintes voies de la croix* by the Venerable Henry Mary Boudon; in the eighteenth century, *Abandonment to Divine Providence* by Father de Caussade, S.J.; and recently (1919), *Le saint abandon* by Dom Vitalis Lehodey, O.C.R.

In this question of abandonment, two dangers must be avoided: quietism and the opposing error. Quietism or semi-quietism denies the necessity of our cooperation and goes so far as to demand in these trials the sacrifice of our hope or desire of salvation.[2] On the contrary, we must in this case, as St. Paul says: "Against hope believe in hope." [3]

The contrary error would consist in exaggerating the necessity of our cooperation while diminishing that of prayer and disregarding the efficacy of our petitions and the conduct of Providence which directs all. It would amount to a sort of practical naturalism. Tried souls should, on the contrary, pray particularly, ask the help of God to persevere in faith, trust, and love. They must be told that, if they continue to pray in this severe trial, it is a sign that, in spite of appearances, their prayer is granted; for no one can continue to pray without a new actual grace. And God who, from all eternity, has foreseen and willed our prayers, excites them in us.

To this general rule of the generous acceptance of the trial in conformity with the divine will, must be added three special rules relating to the three theological virtues, by which especially one must live during the night of the spirit. Here more particularly is verified the expression: "The just man liveth by faith." [4] The night of the spirit is that of faith whose object is obscure mysteries which appear so much the more obscure in proportion as they are higher above the senses. St. Thomas often says: *"Fides est de non*

[2] Denzinger, *Enchiridion,* Errors of Fénelon, nos. 1333 ff "Deus aemulator vult purgare amorem, nullum ei ostendendo perfugium neque ullam spem quoad suum interesse proprium etiam aeternum." "In uno extremarum probationum casu sacrificium aeternae beatitudinis fit aliquo modo absolutum." "In extremis probationibus potest animae *invincibiliter* persuasum esse persuasione reflexa, et quae non est intimus conscientiae fundus, se juste reprobatam esse a Deo." "In hac involuntaria impressione desperationis conficit *sacrificium absolutum* sui interesse proprii quoad aeternitatem."

[3] Rom. 4:18.

[4] Rom. 1:17.

visis," the object of faith is things not seen. One does not believe on testimony what one sees.

Faith in the Mystery of the Cross

In the trial of which we are speaking, the soul must, therefore, firmly believe in what God has told of the great efficacy of the purifying cross in the life of the Church and in its own personal spiritual life. That this faith may be practical, it must tell itself that the cross is necessary and good for it. St. Louis Bertrand, during this period of his life, used often to repeat the words of St. Augustine: "Lord, burn, cut, do not spare now, that in eternity Thou mayest spare." The soul must believe that it is good for it to be thus painfully purified, that this purification is one of the distinctive signs of the children of God, and that this profound and painful purification glorifies the Lord. It must be penetrated with St. Paul's words: "We have this treasure [of divine grace] in earthen vessels, that the excellency [of the Gospel] may be of the power of God, and not of us. In all things we suffer tribulation, but are not distressed; we are straitened, but are not destitute; we suffer persecution, but are not forsaken; we are cast down, but we perish not: always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies." [6] "Power is made perfect in infirmity. Gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me." [8] "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?" [7] "We are the sons of God. And if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ: yet so, if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him." [8]

As sanctifying grace is a participation in the divine nature and makes us like to God, habitual grace, as Christian and as coming from Christ crucified, configures us to Him and prepares us to carry our cross in imitation of Him. In this sense it adds a special modality to sanctifying grace as it was on the first day of creation

• Cf. II Cor. 4:7-10.
**lbid.,* 12:9.
' Luke 24:26.
•Rom. 8:i6f.

in the angels and in Adam in the state of innocence. St. Thomas points this out in treating of baptismal grace.®

Thus we know the mystery of the redemption in a more living, profound, and quasi-experiential manner. We then comprehend how greatly deceived were the Jews who said to our Lord: "If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." [10] They should have said, on the contrary, as did the centurion on witnessing the death of our Savior: "Indeed this man was the Son of God." [11] Christ never appeared greater than during His passion, when He said: "My kingdom is not of this world." [12] "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." [13] "It is consummated." [14] Christ's victory over sin and the devil on Good Friday is far greater than the victory He won over death by His resurrection. The resurrection of His body is only a sign of the power He has to restore life to souls, to forgive them their sins.

The cross is thus a distinctive sign of the Christian who is configured to his Savior. Therefore, as a rule, among the signs of predestination are named: patience in adversity for the love of God, love of enemies in spite of their insults and calumnies, love of the poor, especially when personal affliction supernaturally inclines us to help them. "Because I am not unacquainted with evil things, I know how to commiserate the wretched."

The soul that is in the night of the spirit should, therefore, often contemplate the passion of Christ, following the example of the saints, and ask for light to have a more profound understanding of the holy humiliations of our Savior and of their infinite redemptive value.

Firm Hope and Constant Prayer

During this painful purification, the soul should also, the quietists to the contrary notwithstanding, hope against all human hope, ask-

a *Summa,* Illa, q. 62, a. 2: "Sacramental grace confers something in addition to the grace of the virtues and gifts ... ; thus man becomes a member of Christ."

10 Matt. 27:40.
11 Mark 15:39.
12 John 18:36.
13 Luke 23:34.
14 John 19:30.

ing unceasingly for the help of God. Abraham acted thus when God tried him by asking for the immolation of his son.[18] It may seem to it at first that God does not hear it, as was the case with the woman of Canaan; but He wishes in this way to try the confidence of the soul and at the same time, if it asks Him, He gives it the grace to continue to pray. This grace is itself a sign that He grants the prayer of the soul.

The soul must also recommend itself to the saints that they may intercede for it, especially those who were particularly tried in this manner, such as St. John of the Cross, St. Paul of the Cross, St. Benedict Joseph Labre, and the holy Curé of Ars.

It should pray in the manner used in the liturgy, the elevation of which then appears increasingly clear to those who bear this trial well. "O Lord, deliver my soul. The Lord is merciful and just, and our God showeth mercy." [18] "The Lord ruleth me: and I shall want nothing. . . . He hath led me on the paths of justice, for His own name's sake. For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff, they have comforted me." [17] "Deliver me, O Lord, and set me beside Thee, and let any man's hand fight against me." [18] Christ said: "He that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the fight of life." [19]

That hope may be strengthened in the soul, it is also well in this state to meditate on the canticle in Compline for Lent, which used to make St. Thomas Aquinas weep: "In the midst of life, we are in death. Whom seek we as a protector, except Thou, O Lord, who art justly angered by our sins. Holy God, holy Strong One, holy and merciful Savior, deliver us not up to the bitterness of death. Abandon us not in our old age, nor when our strength will fail us, holy God; holy and strong, holy and merciful." Such is the prayer the soul should make in the night of the spirit; it enables the soul to glimpse all the mystical grandeur of the liturgy.

When we pray in this manner, hope is purified and strengthened in the soul; far from sacrificing the desire for its salvation, as the quietists advised, the soul should desire God more and more purely

[18] Rom. 4:18.
[18] Ps. 114:4 f.
[17] Ps. 22:1-4.
[18] Job 17:3.
[18] John 8:12.

and strongly. True, this desire should not subordinate God to the soul like a fruit necessary to its subsistence, but it should desire to possess God, its supreme Good, in order to glorify Him eternally.[20]

The Love of Conformity and of Submission to God's Good Pleasure

Lastly, in this state of trial, the soul should, as St. Francis de Sales well shows,[21] be penetrated with Christ's words: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me."[22] In spiritual tribulations and afflictions, the soul should nourish itself with the will of God so that self-love may die definitively in it, that the soul may be truly stripped of self-love, and that the reign of the divine will may be established in the depths of its will. The soul will obtain this grace if it accepts, for love of God, to do and suffer all that He wishes, as obedience, circumstances, and the interior light of the Holy Ghost may indicate.

Consequently the soul should be penetrated with the evangelical beatitudes: blessed are the poor in spirit, the meek, those who shed the tears of contrition; those who hunger and thirst after justice and preserve this zeal in spite of all difficulties; blessed, too, are the merciful, the clean of heart, the peacemakers; blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice, when they are insulted and persecuted because of the Savior. Their reward is great in heaven, and even on earth they will receive the hundredfold of all that has been taken from them; they will receive it especially in close union with God and in working for the salvation of their neighbor.

Souls that pass through this denudation and are calumniated ought often to reread what St. Paul says to the Romans: "If God be for us, who is against us? . . . Christ Jesus . . . maketh intercession for us. Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or persecution, or the sword? . . . But in all these things we overcome, because of

20 Cajetan says in his commentary on IIa IIae, q. 17, a.j: "By hope I desire God not for my own sake, but for myself for the sake of God Himself." God remains the ultimate end of the act of hope, and when this act is that of living hope, vivified by charity, we desire God, our supreme Good, in order to glorify Him eternally. The motive of charity elevates that of hope, but it does not suppress it.

21 *Treatise on the Love of God,* Bk. IX, chaps. *2-6,* 15 f.

22 «John 4:34.

Him that hath loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come nor might nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God," [23] nor be able to make God abandon the just, if they do not abandon Him first.

In this period of purification, one should ask our Lord for the love of the cross, for the desire to share in His holy humiliations, in the measure willed by Providence. The soul should ask Him also to let it find in this desire the strength to bear whatever may come, the peace, and sometimes the joy, to restore its courage and that of souls that come to it.[24] Then this trial, hard as it may be at times, will seem good to it; at least the soul will believe that it is salutary and sanctifying for it.

Then it will more readily grasp the great meaning of the words of *The Imitation* on the royal road of the cross: "In the cross is salvation; in the cross is life; in the cross is protection from enemies. In the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness; in the cross is strength of mind; in the cross is joy of spirit; in the cross is height of virtue; in the cross is perfection of sanctity. . . . No man hath so heartfelt a sense of the Passion of Christ as he whose lot it hath been to suffer like things. . . . If thou carry the cross willingly, it will carry thee. . . . If thou carry it unwillingly, thou makest it a burden to thee, and loadest thyself the more. . . . For the sufferings of this

[23] Rom. 8:31-39.

[24] In *Retraite de dix jours à l'usage des Carmélites* (p. 72), Reverend Mother Mary of the Conception, Carmelite of Aix (1877), says on this subject: "To understand and practice annihilation of self and to give oneself up to grace in such a way as to accept humiliation, we need a model whose faithful copy we may become; in our repugnances and weaknesses, we need the strength of Jesus Clirist Himself. His life must be so imprinted on us that, with Him and like Him, we can say: 'Behold I come,' and at the same time give ourselves up entirely to grace. . . .

"As long as our will does not embrace humiliations and sacrifices of every kind, the work of God will not be done in our souls, or will be done only imperfectly. Patience in trials is indeed something, but it is not all. One can be sanctified by resignation, but one rises above self only by union and participation in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Therein is our strength and the principle of this divine life which is founded on the ruins of our self-love. . . . The strengthening of one's will against all the repugnances of nature is obtained only by constant and persevering prayer, great distrust of self, and trust in God which has no other limit than His omnipotence."

life are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come." [25]

The painful purification we are speaking of creates a great void in the soul by driving out self-love and pride, and gives it an increasingly eager desire for God. St. Francis de Sales explains this effect, saying:

> As man can be perfected only by the divine goodness, so the divine goodness can scarcely so well exercise its perfection outside itself as upon our humanity. The one has great need and capacity to receive good, the other great abundance and inclination to bestow it. Nothing is so suitable to indigence as a liberal abundance; nothing so agreeable to a liberal abundance as extreme indigence. . . . The more needy the indigent man is, the more eager he is to receive, as a vacuum is to be filled. Therefore the meeting of abundance and indigence is sweet and desirable; and if our Lord had not said that it is better to give than to receive, one could hardly say which has greater contentment, abundant good in diffusing and communicating itself or failing and indigent good in receiving. . . . Divine goodness has, therefore, more pleasure in giving its graces than we in receiving them.[38]

The void created in the soul that is stripped of self-love and pride causes it to become, therefore, increasingly capable of receiving divine grace, the abundance of charity. In this sense the Apostle says: "God . . . giveth grace to the humble," and He makes them humble in order to fill them to overflowing.

All we have just said shows the profound truth of St. Thomas' words: "The love of God is unitive *(covgregativus'),* inasmuch as it draws man's affections from the many to the one; so that the virtues, which flow from the love of God, are connected together. But self-love disunites *(disgregat)* man's affections among different things, so far as man loves himself, by desiring for himself temporal goods, which are various and of many kinds." [27] The love of God causes the light of reason and that of grace to shine increasingly in us, whereas sin stains the soul, taking away from it the brilliance of the divine light.[28] The purification of the spirit removes these stains, which are in our higher faculties, that they may be resplendent with the true light, which is the prelude of that of eternity.

[25] Bk. II, chap. 12, *passim.*
[26] *Treatise on the Love of God,* Bk. I, chap. 15.
[27] *Summa,* la Ilae, q. 73, a. 1 ad jum.
[28] *Ibid.,* q.86, a. 1.

CHAPTER XXXIX

The Effects of the Passive Purification of the Spirit in Relation Especially to the Three Theological Virtues

HAVING described and explained the passive purification of the spirit and pointed out the rules of direction which should be followed, we shall now set forth its effects on the soul when borne with generosity.

These effects show the end for which God thus purifies His servants. He does so that the higher part of the soul may be supernaturalized and prepared for divine union, as the sensible part must be spiritualized or wholly subjected to the spirit. Among these effects some are negative, consisting in the suppression of defects; others are positive and are found especially in the perfection they give to the virtues in the elevated part of the soul, principally humility and the theological virtues.

Negative Effects

These effects are visible in the progressive disappearance of distractions, dullness of spirit, and the need of external dissipation or of finding consolation. Self-love or subtle egoism gradually disappears. The result is that the soul is less subject to illusions, for it lives increasingly by its higher part, into which the enemy cannot penetrate. God alone penetrates the innermost depths of the heart and spirit. Doubtless the devil still multiplies his temptations, but if the soul takes refuge in its center, where God dwells, the enemy cannot harm it and even cannot know but can only conjecture what is taking place in it; the intimate secrets of hearts escape him.[1]

[1] St. Thomas, Ia, q.57, a.4.

This purification removes many other defects in our relations with our neighbor or in respect to our duties of state: a certain natural rudeness, which leads to impatience; an almost unconscious secret ambition, the cause of many disorders and divisions among people; and also a lack of interest in the occasionally great needs of our afflicted neighbor who turns to us for help. It is in this state that those who have the duty of caring devotedly for others, possess a deeper understanding of Christ's words: "The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep. But the hireling, and he that is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep and flieth; and the wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep." [2] To profit by these words, we should ask the Lord to give us an increase of true zeal, the patient, gentle, disinterested zeal which draws life from God to give it in greater measure to our neighbor.

In connection with this subject, it should be noted that there are also at times collective purifications, like persecutions, from which the soul must know how to draw profit. On such occasions the heroic degree of the virtues becomes necessary; one is in the happy necessity of becoming a saint in order not to be lost. Those who seem fairly good in prosperity are often weak and cowardly in these great difficulties; others, on the contrary, reveal their true character on these occasions. These grave moments should lead us to make the following salutary reflection: true sanctity does not require a lesser purification in outwardly calm periods than in periods troubled by persecution. The saints who lived in the calmest periods of the life of the Church had their interior trials, without which their souls would not have attained to the perfect purity which God willed to see in them.

In no period, however calm it may be, can anyone become a saint without carrying his cross, without being configured to Christ crucified. In troubled times, however, man often faces the urgent necessity of sanctifying himself completely in order not to lose his soul; he must then be heroically faithful in order not to fall back. In other calmer periods, this urgent necessity does not make itself thus felt, but even then, carrying his cross he must follow our Lord. Nothing unclean can enter heaven; one must be purified either before death, like the martyrs, or after it, like the souls in purgatory.

[1] John :o: 11 f.

Lastly, there are other collective trials which demand great uprightness of will: for example, when in the society in which we live some exceptional event occurs that obliges us, though at the cost of great sacrifices, to declare ourselves for God. Such events are visits from the Lord; in them are distinguished His true servants, who, instead of being merely good, must become excellent. With this meaning, the aged Simeon said of the coming of the Child Jesus into the world: "Behold this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted; . . . that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed." [3] In other words, Christ, who had come for the salvation of all, was to be an occasion of fall for many. Refusing to recognize the Savior in Him, they have fallen into infidelity. Thus the secret thoughts of the Pharisees were revealed, whereas they would have remained partly hidden had the Pharisees lived two centuries earlier. Something similar occurs when there is a great supernatural event, like the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin at Lourdes, an event about which the good and the bad are divided. There is, as Pascal says, sufficient light for those who wish to see and sufficient obscurity for those who do not wish to see. These great events, persecutions, or exceptional visits of the Lord, on the occasion of which the good and the tepid are profoundly divided, throw light on what we are saying here of the passive purification of the soul. In periods when the life of society is not marked by anything exceptionally bad or good, no less a purification is needed to reach sanctity than in periods of social upheaval.

In regard to the visits of the Lord, we must also remember that they often differ appreciably. There are visits of consolation, like the apparitions of Lourdes; but if people do not profit by them, the Lord comes to chastise; and if they do not profit by this divine correction, He may come to condemn.[4]

All that we have said shows what profit we should reap from the trials which the Lord sends us, particularly in this prolonged period of spiritual aridity of which we are speaking. If we bear it generously, many defects, which arrest the growth of the divine life in us, will be uprooted forever. Conquered self-love will then give

[3] Luke 2:34 f.

[4] Cf. St. Thomas, *In Isaiam,* chap. 24: "The visitation of the Lord is multiple; of consolation . . . of correction . . . and at times of condemnation."

place to the true love of God, to zeal for His glory and the salvation of souls.

The Positive Effects of This Purification

The positive effects of the dark night of the soul consist chiefly in a great increase in the virtues of the elevated part of the soul, principally in humility, piety, and the theological virtues. These higher virtues come forth greatly purified from all human alloy, in the sense that their formal supernatural motive is brought into strong relief above every secondary or accessory motive which sometimes leads man to practice them in too human a manner.® At this stage especially the formal motive of each of the three theological virtues stands out with increasing clearness: namely, the first revealing truth, the motive of faith; helpful omnipotence, the motive of hope; the divine goodness infinitely more lovable in itself than every created gift, the motive of charity.

But there is first a similar purification of humility. Humility is commonly said to be the fundamental virtue which removes pride, the source of every sin. St. Augustine and St. Thomas for this reason compare it to the excavation that must be dug for the construction of a building, an excavation that needs to be so much deeper as the building is to be higher. Consequently, to deepen humility it does not suffice to scratch the soil a little, it is not sufficient that we ourselves dig, as we do in a thorough examination of conscience. To drive out pride, the Lord Himself must intervene through the special inspirations of the gifts of knowledge and understanding. He then shows the soul the hitherto unsuspected degree of its profound indigence and wretchedness and throws light on the hidden folds of conscience in which lie the seeds of death. Thus a ray of sunlight shining into a dark room shows all the dust, held in suspension in the air and previously imperceptible. Under the purifying divine

"Some persons, for example, go to Mass daily and receive Holy Communion because, without doubt, it is essentially better and more profitable for the soul to do so, but also because it is the custom in the circle in which they move. If this custom disappeared, they too would perhaps cease to go to Mass and to receive Holy Communion daily. The virtues must be increasingly practiced for love of God, independently of these inferior, wholly accessory motives.

light, as under a powerful projector, the soul sees in itself a multitude of defects it had never noticed; confounded by the sight, it cannot bear this light. It sees at times that by its repeated sins it has placed itself in a miserable state, a state of abjection. St. Paul, strongly tempted, felt his frailty keenly. Blessed Angela of Foligno seemed to herself an abyss of sin and wished to declare her state to everyone. St. Benedict Joseph Labre one day began his confession by saying: "Have pity on me, Father, I am a great sinner." The confessor, finding nothing seriously reprehensible in his accusation, said to him: "I see that you do not know how to go to confession." Fie then questioned the saint on the grossest sins, but obtained such humble answers so full of the spirit of faith, that he understood that his penitent, who confessed in this manner, was a saint.

Such is indeed the purification of humility, which is no longer only exterior, no longer the pouting or sad humility of one who holds aloof because people do not approve of him. It becomes true humility of heart, which loves to be nothing that God may be all; it bows profoundly before the infinite majesty of the Most High and before what is divine in every creature.

This true humility then reveals to us the profound meaning of Christ's words: "Without Me you can do nothing." It enables us to understand far better what St. Paul says: "What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" [6] The soul then recognizes experimentally that by its natural powers alone it is absolutely incapable of the least salutary and meritorious supernatural act. It sees the grandeur of the doctrine of the Church which teaches, against semi-Pelagianism, that the beginning of salvation, the beginning of salutary good will, can come only from grace, and that man needs a special gift to persevere to the end. The soul thus purified sees why, according to St. Augustine, St. Thomas, and their disciples, grace is efficacious of itself; far from being rendered efficacious by our good consent, it is grace that gives rise to our consent, it is truly "God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish," as St. Paul says.[7] In this period of painful purification, at grips with strong temptations to discouragement, the soul indeed needs to believe in this divine efficacy of grace, which lifts up the

[6] Cf. I Cor. 4:7.
[7] Phil. 2:13.

weak man, makes him fulfill the precepts, and transforms him.[8]

Thus humility grows, according to the seven degrees enumerated by St. Anselm: "(1) to acknowledge ourselves contemptible; (2) to grieve on account of this; (3) to admit that we are so; (4) to wish our neighbor to believe it; (5) to endure with patience people saying it; (6) to be willing to be treated as a person worthy of contempt; (7) to love to be treated in this way,"[9] and, like St. Francis of Assisi, to find a holy joy in this treatment. This is, in fact, heroic humility. Such virtue presupposes a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost and the passive purification of the spirit. Besides, it is clearly in the normal way of sanctity; full Christian perfection cannot exist without it. As a matter of fact, all the saints possessed great humility; it presupposes the contemplation of two great truths: we have been created out of nothing by God, who freely preserves us in existence; and without the help of His grace we could not perform any salutary and meritorious act.

The soul then attains a quasi-experiential knowledge of the gratuity and efficacy of grace, without which it would not advance, but would certainly fall back. Humility thus purified tells the glory of God more than do the stars in the heavens.

In this stage there is a similar purification of true piety, or the virtue of religion toward God. Substantial devotion, the promptness of the will in the service of the Lord, should, in fact, subsist here in spite of the absence of sensible devotion and spiritual consolation over a period of months and sometimes of years. The inspirations of the gift of piety then come greatly to the aid of the virtue of religion, bestowing on the soul perseverance in prayer in spite of the greatest spiritual aridity.[10] The fruit of this deep piety is meekness, which corresponds, says St. Augustine, to the beatitude of the meek.

[8] Thus at Mass we say before Communion: "Fac me tuis semper inhaerere mandatis et a te nunquam separari permittas."

[9] *Lib. de similitudinibus,* chaps. 100 f.

[10] A very pious person asked the Lord to make her know her nothingness; sometime later she had to spend a night in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. As a rule she had facility in her prayer, which seemed to be the prayer of quiet; but at the beginning of this night of adoration, she experienced a complete void in herself, an absolute coldness, and she heard these words: "You asked Me to make you know your nothingness: behold it."

The Purification of Faith

Just as our Lord Himself teaches His friends to become meek and humble of heart, He also purifies their faith from all alloy.11

Faith is an infused virtue by which we believe firmly all that God has revealed, because He has revealed it and as the Church proposes it. All the faithful doubtless believe in what God has revealed, but many live very little by the supernatural mysteries which are the principal object of faith. They think more often of the truths of religion that reason can attain—the existence of God, His Providence, the immortality of the soul—or they go no farther than the outward, sensible aspect of Christian worship. Often our faith is still too weak to make us truly live by the mysteries of the Blessed Trinity, the Incarnation, the redemption, the Eucharist, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in our souls. These are holy formulas, often repeated with veneration, but they are pale and lifeless, and their object is, as it were, lost in the depths of the heavens. These supernatural mysteries have not sufficiently become for us the light of life, the orientation point of our judgments, the habitual norm of our thoughts.

Likewise, the motive for our belief in these mysteries is undoubtedly the fact that God has revealed them, but we dwell excessively on several secondary motives which aid us: first, these mysteries are the rather generally accepted belief of our family and our country; next, we see a certain harmony between supernatural dogmas and the natural truths accessible to reason; lastly, we have some slight experience of God's action in our souls, and this helps us to believe.

But let us suppose that God were suddenly to take away from us all these secondary motives which facilitate the act of faith and on which we perhaps dwell too much. Let us suppose that in spiritual

11 We treated this question of the passive purification of faith, hope, and charity, in *L'Amour de Dieu et la croix de Jésus,* II, 575-632. We ourselves understood as never before the meaning and import of the teaching of St. John of the Cross on this point on reading *La petite vie de sainte Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus,* especially chapter nine, where the author speaks of the dark night and the tunnel through which the saint had to pass in order to reach the transforming union. The idea came to us then to compare the teaching of St. John of the Cross on the passive purification of the spirit with what St. Thomas says of the formal motive of the theological virtues. It is marvelous how mutually illuminating are the teachings of these two great masters.

aridity prolonged for months and years, we no longer experience in ourselves the consoling action of God and no longer see the harmony between supernatural mysteries and natural truths; then the act of faith will become difficult for us. This is true especially if the purifying divine light illumines in these mysteries what is loftiest and apparently least conformable to reason: for example, infinite justice on the one hand, and the gratuity of predestination on the other. Besides, in this trial the devil seeks to make our judgment deviate, to show us that there is severity in inexorable divine justice, as if the damned sought pardon without being able to obtain it, whereas in reality they never ask pardon. The enemy seeks also to make us interpret the judgments of the divine good pleasure as arbitrary, despotic, and capricious, adding that an infinitely good and omnipotent God could not permit all the evil that happens in the world; the evil spirit increases this evil in order to draw an additional objection from it. He sounds a false note to trouble the superior harmony of the mysteries of faith. At times he wishes to persuade the soul that there is nothing after death, and he puts forth every effort to give this negation the appearance of an icy evidence which imposes itself absolutely.[12]

The question may then be put under the form of a temptation against faith: Does the supernatural world exist? The soul finds itself between two opposing influences: that of the purifying divine

[12] A person who was very much tried wrote us on this subject: "These last days a thick and somber veil covered my poor soul. . . . I walked gropingly, forcing myself to remember, in order to direct myself, the truths of faith to which I would have wished to cling; but I was like a shipwrecked person, who, to save himself, struggles madly toward a rock and, when he seems to reach it, is thrown back by the waves; thus my soul could not grasp the certitude of what one must believe. . . . A single conviction seemed to impose itself on me: the nothingness of everything supernatural, and, with a sort of certitude, the negation of eternal life. All this imposed itself on my spirit in spite of me, with, as it were, indisputable evidence to which I had inevitably to resign myself. . . . It was like the crumbling away of my beloved faith, which for so long a time had guided my life. . . . However, occasionally the thought struck me: If I should acquiesce in these invitations, I would doubt the words of our Lord, who is too holy to be able to lie, and I felt as an imperious duty the necessity of being faithful to Him for the honor of our mutual love, for we had given each other all that we are. And then I was able to say: Lord, I believe, I will to believe, but increase my faith." We recounted at greater length the struggles of this valiant soul in the story of her life: *Mere Françoise de Jésus, fondatrice de la Compagnie de la Vierge* (Desclée de Brouwer, 1937), pp. 43-65.

light which casts the intellect into the unsuspected depths of mysteries, as if one were thrown into the sea before knowing how to swim; and on the other hand, the influence of the devil, who tries to cause the effect of the divine light to deviate.

In order to believe, there is left only this sole motive: God has revealed it; every secondary motive has momentarily disappeared. The soul should then ask for the actual grace that enables it to make the act of faith; the grace that makes it overcome, rise above the temptation, instead of reasoning against it; the grace that makes it adhere to the divine revealing Truth, to the authority of God revealing, above the excessively superficial and narrow conceptions it had of the divine perfections.[13] Then the soul gradually "finds shelter in the immutable," in the first Truth, in the uncreated and revealing word, which makes it clearly understand that infinite justice is free from any cruelty, that it is identical in God with the most tender mercy. It also makes the soul see distinctly that, far from being capricious, the divine good pleasure is infinitely wise, and that the divine permission of the greatest evils is holy, for it has in view a higher good of which God alone is the judge and which the soul shall one day contemplate. This superior good is at times dimly seen on earth in the night of the spirit.[14]

Faith is then purified from all alloy and no longer dwells on secondary motives which facilitated its act; they have momentarily disappeared. It no longer dwells on the sensible aspect of the mysteries of the Incarnation, the redemption, the Eucharist; it enters into the depths of divine revelation.

Thus the faith of the apostles was purified during the painful trial

[13] The contemplative soul then receives, as St. John of the Cross explains *(The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chaps. 5, 8f.), a supernatural light, that of the gift of understanding, which, revealing the spirit of the word of God, obliges the soul to go beyond the letter and its inferior habits of conceiving of the divine perfections. This infused light illumines the wholly supernatural heights of the mysteries of infinite justice, infinite mercy, predestination, the passion of Christ, the salvation of souls. Then the petty conceptions to which the soul was accustomed, shine forth, as it were. The soul is in astonishment in this spiritual night. In reality, there is here an excessive light for eyes that are still too weak to bear it. But the soul emerges from the crucible with a far higher and firmer knowledge of the truths of faith, passing beyond dogmatic formulas that it may believe profoundly in the mysteries expressed by these formulas, and henceforth live continually by them.

[14] We explained the foundations of this doctrine in *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* pp. 74 ff.

of the Passion, in which Jesus, whom three of them had contemplated on Tabor, appeared humiliated and crushed. They had to believe that in spite of this annihilation He was the Son of God made flesh, who would rise on the third day. The Blessed Virgin, St. John, and Magdalen remained firm in faith on Calvary. Likewise after the Ascension, the apostles, henceforth deprived of the sight of the risen Christ, had to live in the obscurity of faith; from Pentecost on, they preached this faith with the most absolute certitude, even to martyrdom.

The saints have known the same kind of trials. St. Vincent de Paul was tormented for four years by a temptation against faith. For ten years Blessed Henry Suso had a similar temptation.

At the end of such a trial, faith is considerably increased, tenfold and even more. The night of the spirit then becomes a starlit night in which one sees dimly the depths of the firmament; that this might be so, the sun had to hide. To glimpse the splendor of supernatural mysteries, reason must have made its sacrifice; it must have renounced seeing by its own light, and must have humbly received the divine light. Similarly, if he is deeply Christian, a deposed king, like Louis XVI, glimpses at the moment of his trial the beauty of the kingdom of God, which is infinitely superior to every earthly kingdom.

At the end of this purification, the soul is deeply convinced that the only reality that counts is supernatural life, and it then asks itself whether it will be able to persevere in this life. At this stage the effects of the purification of hope begin to make themselves felt. This is the third conversion, where we find again, as in the first, the acts of the three theological virtues, but in a far superior manner.[18] The Lord plows the same furrow more deeply that the seed placed

[18] The Council of Trent, Sess. VI, chap. *6* (Denzinger, no. 798) enumerates among the acts that dispose die sinner to conversion or justification: the act of faith united to the fear of God, the act of hope, and the initial love of God, the Source of all justice, which inclines the soul to hatred of sin.

St. Thomas (la Ilae, q.113, a.3-5) explains at greater length how faith, hope, and charity concur in the conversion of the soul to God. In the second conversion, the passive purification of the senses, and in the third, the night of the spirit, there is something similar, but more lofty and more profound. In the third conversion the soul turns definitively toward God in order to reach that transforming union and confirmation in grace which was granted on Pentecost to the apostles, when since the Ascension they had been deprived of the sight of Christ's humanity.

in the earth may produce not only ten or thirtyfold, but even sixty and a hundredfold, as we read in the Gospel.[16]

At this time there begins in the soul a more intimate contemplation of God, which tends to become continuous and like an uninterrupted conversation with Him. Then one grasps increasingly better what is said in the Book of Wisdom about the value of wisdom itself: "I preferred her before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her. Neither did I compare unto her any precious stone: for all gold in comparison of her is as a little sand, and silver in respect to her shall be counted as clay." [17] This wisdom is the "pearl of great price" mentioned in the Gospel; a man sells all that he has to buy it.[18]

The Purification of Hope

After the effects of the purification of faith, the purification of hope begins to make itself felt. The soul, now convinced that the one thing necessary is sanctification and salvation, asks itself at times whether, in the midst of the great difficulties it is in, it will persevere to the end.

Hope is the theological virtue by which we tend toward God, as toward our beatitude, relying, in order to reach Him, on His mercy and His helpful omnipotence. The first object of hope is God to be possessed eternally; the formal motive of this theological virtue is God our Helper, *Deus atixilians,* as the formal motive of faith is God revealing: *Veritas prima revelans.*

Every good Christian has this infused virtue, united to charity; and it is indeed God whom he hopes for when he asks for the grace necessary for salvation. But often our hope lacks elevation, in the sense that we excessively desire certain temporal goods, which may seem useful to us for our salvation and yet are not. We may even too greatly desire certain human goods which would be harmful to us and would impede the higher goods that come from detachment and humility. From this point of view, our hope lacks life; it does not rise directly enough toward God.

[16] Cf. Mark 4:8: "And some fell upon good ground and brought forth fruit that grew up and increased and yielded, one thirty, another sixty, and another a hundred."

[17] Wisd. 7:8 f.

[18] Matt. 13:46.

Moreover, there is often some alloy in the motive inspiring our hope. Doubtless we count on the help of God, but we also rely, and occasionally too much so, on inferior motives that are much less sure. We may have too much confidence in ourselves, in our tact, energy, virtues, in various human helps within our reach, just as we may pass through moments of discouragement when we do not succeed and human helps fail us.

If God, wishing to purify our hope of all alloy, should suddenly take away from us the temporal goods which we hope for and also the secondary motives which sustain our trust,—the sympathy and help of our friends, the encouragement and esteem of superiors—if at the same time He should show us our frailty in a hitherto unsuspected degree, if He were to permit calumnies, tenacious contradictions against us, and, with all of that, illness, would we still hope "against all human hope" for this sole motive, that no matter what happens God remains infinitely helpful?

This is the time to say: "The Lord is compassionate and merciful, long suffering, and plenteous in mercy";[18] "God never commands the impossible";[20] He never permits us to be tempted above our strength, aided by grace.[21] The divine help is always offered to us for salvation; God does not abandon us unless we first abandon Him; He is always willing to raise us up from our sins when we cry to Him.

Speaking through Isaias, the Lord says: "For the mountains shall be moved, and the hills shall tremble; but My mercy shall not depart from thee, and the covenant of My peace shall not be moved: said the Lord that hath mercy on thee."[22]

The Psalmist writes: "For He hath hidden me in His tabernacle; in the day of evils, He hath protected me in the secret place of His tabernacle. He hath exalted me upon a rock. . . . Thy face, O Lord, will I still seek. . . . Be Thou my helper, forsake me not; do not Thou despise me, O God my Savior. For my father and

18. Ps. 102:8. Cf. Lam. 3:22: "His commiserations have not failed."

20 "God never commands the impossible, but in commanding warns us to do what we are able and to ask for grace to accomplish what we cannot do." Council of Trent, Sess. VI, chap. 11 (Denzinger, no. 804). This quotation is taken from St. Augustine, *De natura et gratia,* chap. 43, no. 50.

21 Cf. I Cor. 10:13: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it."

22. Isa. 54:10.

my mother have left me; but the Lord hath taken me up." [23]

The saints hoped thus in the hours of their great trials. In his Lamentations, Jeremias lets the following cry of anguish escape: "My end and my hope is perished from the Lord," but immediately after he cries out: "Remember my poverty, and transgression, the wormwood and the gall. . . . The mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed: because His commiserations have not failed. . . . For the Lord will not cast off forever. For if Fie hath cast off, He will also have mercy, according to the multitude of His mercies. For He hath not willingly afflicted, nor cast off the children of men." [24]

In his prison St. John the Baptist hoped in this manner when he saw all that was opposed to the kingdom of God, whose coming he had announced. So too the apostles remained firm even to martyrdom. We find another example of heroic hope in St. John of the Cross, who continued to hope in his prison cell when all seemed leagued against the reform of Carmel. In the same way St. Alphonsus Liguori heroically placed his trust in God when the religious family that he had founded seemed on the point of perishing. At times the sacrifice of Isaac is again demanded of the true servants of God, that they may labor at the task entrusted to them, no longer as if it were theirs, but as the work of Almighty God, who can overcome all obstacles and who will infallibly overcome them if He has decreed from all eternity that the work in question should be established.

Then, above every inferior motive of trust, will increasingly appear the formal motive of Christian hope: *Deus auxilians,* God our Helper, His helpful omnipotence, and the infinite merits of Christ; and the soul will be moved to utter the prayer of Esther: "O my Lord, who alone art our King, help me a desolate woman, and who have no other helper but Thee. My danger is in my hands. . . . Give not, O Lord, Thy scepter to them that are not. . . . Remember, O Lord, and show Thyself to us in the time of our tribulation, and give me boldness. . . . O God, who art mighty above

[23] Ps. *16:s, 6,* 8-IO.

[24] Lam. 3:18-22, 31-33. We have established the fact that this page of Jeremias has restored hope to greatly tried souls that believed themselves on the point of saying, like the Prophet: "My end and my hope is perished from the Lord." It is a question here of hoping against all hope, as St. Paul says in Romans 4:18.

all, hear the voice of them that have no other hope, and deliver us from the hand of the wicked, and deliver me from my fear." 28

Hope is here transformed into perfect abandonment, whether in regard to a divine work to be accomplished on earth or to our eternal salvation. This trusting abandonment rests on the divine will not yet manifested; but that it may rest on it in this way, presupposes constant fidelity to the divine will already signified by the duty of the present moment. The more our will conforms through obedience to the signified divine will, the more it can abandon itself with confidence to the divine will of good pleasure not yet manifested, on which our future and eternity depend.

The same holds true for the dying, and should be kept in mind when we are assisting them in their agony. We should beg God to grant them this trust, united to perfect abandonment, that, being conformed to His signified divine will, they may with more perfect trust accept death, that leap into the unknown, which is nothing else than abandonment to the divine good pleasure not yet manifested. In this way the soul rises above the obscurity from beneath, which comes from matter, error, and sin, that it may lose itself in the obscurity from on high, which is that of the intimate life of God and of His love for each of us.2"

At the end of this purification of hope, this virtue is freed from

*· Esther 14:3 f., ii f., 19.

'· Cf. *The Interior Castle,* sixth mansion, chap. 1. At this stage it is not rare for the soul to be tempted in regard to the mystery of predestination, as St. Catherine of Siena was by the devil, who said to her: "What is the use of these mortifications if you are not predestined? And if you are, you will be saved without them." To which the saint replied: "If I am predestined, what is the use of your efforts to destroy me? And if I am not, why take so much trouble?"

Predestination, like Providence, bears not only on the end, but on the means to attain it. And as in the natural order the harvest is obtained only by seed, in the order of grace, salvation is obtained only by prayer and the practice of the virtues.

We must also tell ourselves that the certitude of hope is not precisely that of attaining our end; to have such a certitude, we would need a special revelation of our predestination; it is rather a certitude of tendency, as St. Thomas says so well (IIa IIae, q. 18, a.4): "Hope tends to its end with certainty, as though sharing in the certainty of faith." The certitude of hope is that of a tendency which, under the light of faith, is infallibly in the true direction of the end to be attained. It is confidence in God who is infinitely helpful and in His promises. Thus when we have taken at Paris the train that goes to Rome, we firmly hope to reach the end of die journey; we tend surely toward it.

self-love which mingled in it, from the more or less inordinate desire of consolation, and it becomes much stronger in its purity. Hope is the desire for God, to possess Him Himself, above His gifts; and yet God does not show Himself, does not make His presence felt. At this time the soul begins to experience the effect of the passive purification of charity.

The Purification of Charity

At this stage particularly, the passive purifications of the present life resemble those of purgatory, although they differ greatly from it, since in purgatory there is no longer any merit or increase of charity.

This theological virtue, the highest of the infused virtues, is that which makes us love God for Himself, because He is infinitely lovable in Himself, infinitely better than every creature and than all His gifts. It makes us love Him also because He first loved us, by communicating to us a participation in His intimate life. Charity is thus a holy friendship by which we give back to God the love He has for us, and by which also we love our neighbor inasmuch as he is loved by God, inasmuch as he is a child of God or called to become one.

Every good Christian undoubtedly has this virtue. By it we love God for Himself; but we also love Him for the consolations He gives us, because He makes Himself felt by us, because what we undertake for Him succeeds and gives us contentment. Likewise, we love our neighbor for the love of God, because he is loved by our common Father; but we also love him because he responds to our charity, our courtesies, our devotion, because he gives evidence of gratitude. And at times when, instead of gratitude, we see ingratitude, we do not love the soul of our seemingly ungrateful neighbor as we should, for, as a matter of fact, we should love even our enemies and pray for those who persecute us, that they may return to the road of salvation. Consequently there is some alloy in our charity. This base element is evident occasionally when our charity fails to overcome some bitterness or ill-temper, following on a want of consideration.

Therefore, when the Lord wishes to lead a soul, already possessed of great hope, to a more pure, more disinterested love of God for

Himself, above all His gifts, He deprives it of all spiritual consolation, of His sensible presence, for months and years, though He becomes more intimately present in the soul and acts more profoundly in it. He seems to withdraw from it, as God the Father seemed to withdraw from the soul of Jesus on the cross when in His agony He cried out: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" aT This exclamation, taken from a Messianic psalm,28 is immediately followed in the same psalm, as it was in the heart of Christ, by sentiments of perfect trust, abandonment, and love.

When in this spiritual night the soul seems to be abandoned by God, it makes a great act of love for this sole and most pure motive: God is infinitely good in Himself, infinitely better than every created gift, and it is He who first loved us. Following the example of His crucified Son, I must return Him love for love.

St. Teresa of the Child Jesus was well acquainted with these very-painful hours, and what we learn about them in her life helps us to a clearer understanding of the doctrine of St. John of the Cross on the purification of love, and of St. Thomas' teaching on the formal motive of charity. At this stage of the spiritual life, this motive appears in all its elevation, like a star of first magnitude in the night of the spirit, together with the motive of faith and that of hope.

We read, in fact, toward the end of the life of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus:

> My soul has known many kinds of trials. I have suffered greatly here on earth. In my childhood, I suffered with sadness; today, in peace and joy I taste all bitter fruits. . . . During the luminous days of the paschal season last year, Jesus made me understand that there are really impious souls without faith and hope (which I found it hard to believe). He then allowed my soul to be invaded by the thickest darkness, and the thought of heaven, which had been so sweet to me since my early childhood, to become for me a subject for struggle and torment. The duration of this trial was not limited to a few days, a few weeks; I have been suffering for months and I am still waiting for the hour of my deliverance. I wish I could express what I feel, but it is impossible. One must have passed through this dark tunnel to understand its obscurity. . . .
>
> Lord, Thy child has understood Thy divine light which shines in the darkness. She begs Thee to pardon her unbelieving brethren, and is will-

,T Mark 15:34.
*· Pi. 11:1.

ing to eat the bread of suffering as long as Thou mayest wish. For love of Thee she takes her place at this table filled with bitterness where poor sinners take their food, and she does not wish to rise from it before receiving a sign from Thy hand. But may she not say in her own name and in the name of her guilty brethren: "O God, be merciful to us sinners"? [78] Send us away justified. May all those who are not enlightened by the torch of faith at last see it shine. . . .

When, weary of the surrounding darkness, I wish to rest my heart by the fortifying memory of a future and eternal life, my torment redoubles. It seems to me that the shadows, borrowing the voice of the impious, mockingly say to me: "You dream of light, of a sweet-scented country, you dream of the eternal possession of the Creator of these marvels; you believe that you will one day emerge from the mists in which you languish. Forward! Forward! Rejoice in death, which will give you, not what you hope for, but a still darker night, the night of nothingness. . . ."

Knowing that it is cowardly to fight a duel, I turn my back on my adversary without ever looking him in the face; then I run to Jesus and tell Him that I am ready to shed every drop of my blood to acknowledge that there is a heaven. I tell Him that I am happy not to be able to contemplate here on earth with the eyes of my soul the beautiful heaven which awaits me, in order that He may deign to open it for eternity to poor unbelievers.

Consequently, in spite of this trial which takes from me every feeling of enjoyment, I can still cry out: "Thou hast given me, O Lord, a delight in Thy doings." [80] For what joy can be greater than that of suffering for Thy love? The more intense the suffering is and the less it appears to men, the more it causes Thee to smile, O my God. . . . May I prevent or make reparation for a single sin committed against faith. . . .

When I sing of the happiness of heaven, of the eternal possession of God, I do not experience any joy, for I sing simply what I will to believe. At times, I admit, a very tiny ray of light illumines my dark night, then the trial ceases for a moment; but afterward, the memory of this ray, instead of consoling me, makes my darkness thicker still.

I have never felt so fully that the Lord is sweet and merciful. He did not send me this heavy cross until I was able to bear it; formerly, I believe that it would have cast me into discouragement. Now it produces only one effect: it takes from me every feeling of natural satisfaction in my longing for heaven.[81]

[78] Cf. Luke 18:13.
[80] Ps. 91:5.
[81] *Une Rose effeuillée,* chap. 9.

Such is the simultaneous passive purification of faith, hope, and love of God and of souls in God, a purification which, in the case of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus, is united to reparatory suffering for sinners.

Then the most pure motive of this love of charity appears in all its elevation: namely, that God is sovereignly'lovable in Himself, infinitely more so than all the gifts which He has given us and which we expect from Him. Here the acts of faith, hope, and charity fuse, so to speak, in an act of perfect abandonment to the divine will, while the soul repeats the words of Christ on the cross: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." [82]

Then the soul understands what St. John of the Cross says: "For this is a certain fire of love in the spirit whereby the soul, amidst these dark trials, feels itself wounded to the quick by this strong love divine. . . . And inasmuch as this love is infused in a special way, the soul corresponds only passively with it, and thus a strong passion of love is begotten within it. . . . The soul is itself touched, wounded, and set on fire with love. . . . The soul, however, amidst these gloomy and loving pains, is conscious of a certain companionship and inward strength which attends upon it and invigorates it." [33]

St. Teresa speaks in like manner of this last purification which precedes the transforming union: "She sees herself still far away from God, yet with her increased knowledge of His attributes, her longing and her love for Him grow ever stronger as she learns more fully how this great God and Sovereign deserves to be loved. . . . She is like one suspended in mid-air, who can neither touch the earth nor mount to heaven; she is unable to reach the water while parched with thirst, and this is not a thirst that can be borne, but one which nothing will quench." [84]

At the end of this trial, charity toward God and one's neighbor is purified of all alloy, as gold in the crucible is freed from its dross. And not only is the love of charity thus purified, but notably increased. The soul now makes intense and heroic acts of charity, which obtain immediately the increase of grace which they merit, and with sanctifying grace increase greatly at the same time all the

·' Luke 23:46.
*· *The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chap. 11.
" *The Interior Castle,* sixth mansion, chap. 11.

infused virtues and the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, which are connected with charity.

The love of God and of souls then becomes increasingly disinterested, ever more ardent and forgetful of self. We admire the purity of the conjugal love of the sailor's wife who does not cease to think of her absent husband, who may be dead, since for several months she has had no word that he is still alive. She loves him as if he were present, and brings up her children in the love of their father who has disappeared. How can we fail to admire the purity of love in these spouses of Jesus Christ who, like St. Teresa of Lisieux, remain for a long time, for months and months, deprived of His presence, in the greatest darkness and aridity, and who do not cease to love Him with a love as strong as it is pure, for the sole motive that He is infinitely good in Himself and incomparably more so than all His gifts! In this state the tenderness of love is transformed into the strength of union, according to the expression of the Canticle of Canticles: "Love is strong as death," [35] and even stronger, for no trial can overthrow love. The soul then remembers that in our Lord, who fashions souls to His image, love on the cross was stronger than spiritual death, that it was the conqueror of sin and the devil, and by the resurrection the victor over death which is the result of sin. In the passive purifications, described by St. John of the Cross, the Christian and Catholic mystic relives these great truths of faith; thereby the soul is configured to Christ in His sorrowful life, before being configured to Him in His glorious life for eternity.

Sufferings That Sometimes Accompany the Passive Purification of the Spirit

St. Teresa [36] speaks of this purification, but does not distinguish as clearly as St. John of the Cross does, what essentially constitutes it from the sufferings which quite often accompany it, and which she herself experienced, as we see from her autobiography.[87]

In *The Interior Castle* she writes:

O my God, how many troubles both interior and exterior must one suffer before entering the seventh mansion! Sometimes, while pondering

[35] Cant. 8:6.
[36] *The Interior Castle,* sixth mansion, chap. i.
[87] *Her Life,* chaps. 28-30.

over this I fear that, were they known beforehand, human infirmity could scarcely bear the thought nor resolve to encounter them, however great might appear the gain. . . . They really seem to have lost everything.

I shall not enumerate these trials in their proper order, but will describe them as they come to my memory, beginning with the least severe. This is an outcry raised against such a person by those amongst whom she lives. . . . They say she wants to pass for a saint, that she goes to extremes in piety to deceive the world. . . . Persons she thought were her friends desert her, making the most bitter remarks of all. They take it much to heart that her soul is ruined—she is manifestly deluded—it is all the devil's work—she will share the fate of so-and-so who was lost through him. . . . They make a thousand scoffing remarks of the same sort.

I know someone who feared she would be unable to find any priest who would hear her confession,[88] to such a pass did things come. . . . The worst of it is, these troubles do not blow over but last all her life. . . . How few think well of her in comparison with the many who hate her! . . . Experience has shown the mind that men are as ready to speak well as ill of others, so it attaches no more importance to the one than to the other. . . . [Later] the soul is rather strengthened than depressed by its trials, experience having taught it the great advantages derived from them. It does not think men offend God by persecuting it, but that He permits them to do so for its greater gain. . . .

Our Lord now usually sends severe bodily infirmity. . . . Yet, oh! the rest would seem trifling in comparison could I relate the interior torments met with here, but they are impossible to describe. Let us first speak of the trial of meeting with so timorous and inexperienced a confessor that nothing seems safe to him; he dreads and suspects everything but the commonplace, especially in a soul in which he detects any imperfection, for he thinks people on whom God bestows such favors must be angels, which is impossible while we live in our bodies. He at once ascribes everything to the devil or melancholy. . . .

One of the severe trials of these souls, especially if they have lived wicked lives, is their belief that God permits them to be deceived in punishment for their sins. While actually receiving these graces they feel secure and cannot but suppose that these favors proceed from the Spirit of God; but this state lasts a very short time, while the remembrance of their misdeeds is ever before them, so that when, as is sure to happen, they discover any faults in themselves, these torturing thoughts return. The soul is quieted for a time when the confessor reassures it,

[88] Cf. *Lift,* chap. 18.

although it returns later on to its former apprehensions; but when he augments its fears, they become almost unbearable. Especially is this the case when such spiritual dryness ensues that the mind feels as if it never had thought of God nor ever will be able to do so. When men speak of Him, they seem to be talking of some person heard of long ago.

All this is nothing without the further pain of thinking we cannot make our confessors understand the case and are deceiving them. . . . She believes all that the imagination, which now has the upper hand, puts before her mind, besides crediting the falsehoods suggested to her by the devil, whom doubtless our Lord gives leave to tempt her. . . .

In short, there is no other remedy in such a tempest except to wait for the mercy of God who, unexpectedly, by some casual word or unforeseen circumstance, suddenly dispels all these sorrows. . . . It praises our Lord God like one who has come out victorious from a dangerous battle, for it was He who won the victory. The soul is fully conscious that the conquest was not its own as all weapons of self-defence appeared to be in the enemies' hands. Thus it realizes its weakness and how little man can help himself if God forsake him."[88]

Tauler speaks in like strain, as we noted earlier. His teaching on this subject, which should be read, will be found in his sermons for the Monday before Palm Sunday (nos. 7, 8), for Easter Sunday, for the Monday before Ascension Thursday, and in the third sermon for the Ascension.[40]

It would be easy to show by quotations from other masters that the teaching of St. John of the Cross is entirely conformable to the tradition of the great spiritual writers, to what they have said of the royal way of the cross, *ad lucem per crucem,* and of the progressive configuration of the soul to Christ crucified. We read in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans:[41] "Heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ: yet so, if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him."

88 *The Interior Castle,* sixth mansion, chap. 1.

40 Cf. *Sermons de Tauler* (trans. Hugueny, Théry), I, 252, 263, 302, 321 ft., 345-

41 Rom. 8:17. Blessed Angela of Foligno wrote some magnificent pages of incomparable realism on the night of the spirit. Cf. especially *Le Livre des visions et instructions* (trans. E. Hello), chap. 7: The sight of the cross; chap. 9: The way of the cross: chap. 26: The great darkness: "One day my soul was ravished and I saw God in a light superior to every known light. . . . I saw God in a darkness, and necessarily in a darkness, because He is too far above the spirit, and no proportion exists between Him and anything that can become the object of a thought. . . . I see nothing, I see all. Certitude is

obtained in the darkness. The more profound the darkness, so much more does the good exceed all. This is the reserved mystery. . . . The divine power, wisdom, and will, which I saw marvelously elsewhere seems less than this. This is a whole; the others could be called parts." Blessed Angela had then, through eminent infused contemplation, the experimental knowledge of what speculative theology expresses in the following terms: the Deity, or the intimate life of God, contains formally and eminently absolute perfections: being, intelligence, wisdom, love, and so forth, which are naturally sharable and naturally knowable. The Deity as such surpasses every concept, it can be participated in only through sanctifying grace, which is not naturally knowable. Cf. Cajetan on la, q. 39, a. 1, no. 7: "The formal reason of the Deity is especially in its being and in all its attributes, for it is above being and above unity, etc."

See also Blessed Angela of Foligno, *op. cit.,* chap. 33: True love and false love; chap. 46: The embrace; chap. 55: Poverty of spirit; chap. 56: Ecstasy; chap. 61: The third companion of Jesus Christ: Suffering; chap. 6y: The ways of love.

Over a period of about thirty years, in our ministry we have found at least twenty times in contemplative communities the night of the spirit quite clearly characterized, and, in several cases, without any malady, in very rational subjects whose duty it was to direct a community or a congregation, and who did it very well.

CHAPTER XL

The Spiritual Age of the Perfect, Their Union with God

THE painful passive purification just described is followed by a resurrection of the soul and a new life. The apostles experienced this change when, after being deprived of the presence of Christ's humanity on Ascension Day, they were on Pentecost transformed, enlightened, strengthened, and confirmed in grace by the Holy Ghost that they might preach the Gospel to the ends of the known world and seal their preaching with their blood.

We shall point out here the principal signs of the age of the perfect so far as it is distinguished from the age of beginners and that of proficients. We shall indicate particularly what characterizes the knowledge of God and of self in the perfect and also their love of charity.

Quasi-Experimental and Almost Continual Knowledge of God

After the passive purification of the spirit, which is like a third conversion and transformation, the perfect know God in a quasi-experimental manner that is not transitory, but almost continual. Not only during Mass, the Divine Office, or prayer, but in the midst of external occupations, they remain in the presence of God and preserve actual union with Him.

The matter will be easily understood by our considering the egoist's contrary state of soul. The egoist thinks always of himself and, without realizing it, refers everything to himself. He talks continually with himself about his inordinate desires, sorrows, or superficial joys; his intimate conversation with himself is endless,

but it is vain, sterile, and unproductive for all. The perfect man, on the contrary, instead of thinking always of himself, thinks continually of God, His glory, and the salvation of souls; he instinctively makes everything converge toward the object of his thoughts. His intimate conversation is no longer with himself, but with God, and the words of the Gospel frequently recur to his mind to enlighten from on high the smallest pleasurable or painful facts of daily life. His soul sings the glory of God, and from it radiate spiritual light and fervor, which are perpetually bestowed on him from above.

The reason for this state is that the perfect man, unlike the beginner, no longer contemplates God only in the mirror of sensible things or of the Gospel parables, about which it is impossible to think continually. Neither does he, like the proficient, contemplate God only in the mirror of the mysteries of the life of Christ, a prayer that cannot last all day long; but, in the penumbra of faith, he contemplates the divine goodness itself, a little as we see the diffused light that always surrounds us and illumines everything from above.

According to the terms used by Dionysius the Mystic and preserved by St. Thomas,[1] this is the movement of circular contemplation, superior to the straight and the oblique movements. The straight movement, like the flight of the lark, rises from a sensible fact recalled in a parable to a divine perfection, from the sight of the prodigal son to infinite mercy. The oblique movement rises, for example, from the mysteries of the childhood of Christ to those of His passion, of His glory, and finally to the infinite love of God for us. The circular movement is similar to the flight of the eagle, which, after soaring aloft, delights in describing the same circle several times, then hovers seemingly motionless in the light of the sun, scrutinizing the depths of the horizon.

Here it is a question of a knowledge of the radiating goodness of God. The soul sees now in a quasi-experimental manner that everything God has done in the order of nature and that of grace is intended to manifest His goodness, and that if He permits evil, like a dissonance, it is for a higher good, which is glimpsed at times and which will appear on the last day.

This contemplation, by reason of its superior simplicity, may be continual and, far from hindering us from beholding the sequence

1 *Summa,* IIa IIae, q. 180, a. 5.

of events, lets us see them from above, somewhat as God sees them, as a man on a mountain sees what is happening on the plain below. It is like the prelude or the aurora of the vision of the fatherland, although the soul is still in the obscurity of faith.

This very simple supernatural view even on earth was continual in Mary, to a lesser degree in St. Joseph. It also enabled the apostles, after Pentecost, to see in the divine light what they were to do for the preaching of the Gospel and the constitution of the first churches.

This all-embracing spiritual gaze is to be found in all the saints; it does not exclude significant details, but admirably perceives their profound meaning. At the same time it removes the imperfections springing from natural haste, unconscious self-seeking, and the lack of habitual recollection.

As a consequence the perfect know themselves, no longer only in themselves but in God, their beginning and end. In Him they see their indigence, the infinite distance separating them from the Creator; they feel themselves preserved in being by His sovereignly free love. They ceaselessly experience to what a degree they need His grace for the least salutary act; they do not become discouraged over their sins, but draw a truer humility from them. They make their examination of conscience by considering what is written of their existence in the book of life. They sincerely consider themselves useless servants, who of themselves can do nothing, but whom the Lord deigns to use for the accomplishment of great things, those that prepare the life of eternity. If they see their neighbor's sins, they think there is no sin committed by another which they themselves would not be capable of committing had they the same heredity and were they placed in the same circumstances, faced with the same temptations. If they see the great virtues of other souls, they rejoice in them for the sake of the Lord and of souls, remembering that in the mystical body of Christ the growth of one member redounds to the profit of all the others.

This infused contemplation proceeds from a living faith illumined by the gift of wisdom, which, under the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, shows that nothing good happens unless God wills it, nothing evil unless God permits it for a higher good. This eminent view may be almost continual by reason of its simplicity and universality, because the events of daily life fall under its scope, like

lessons about the things of God and like the application of the Gospel to each one's life. It is the continuation of the Gospel which is being written in souls until the end of time.

Then the Christian who has attained to this state has such knowledge of the divine perfections and of the virtues demanded of the soul, that he has passed beyond not only the confused concept but also the distinct concept of the theologian, to the experimental concept, rich in all the experience of life, which becomes concrete, enlightening him from above for the good of souls. Thus he attains to the experiential concept of infinite goodness, as well as to that of perfect simplicity and true humility, which inclines him to love to be nothing in order that God may be all.

Loving God with One's Whole Mind

The perfect man attains in consequence to that profound intimacy with the Lord toward which charity or the divine friendship tends. Such intimacy is truly reciprocal benevolence together with this *convivere,* this life shared with another, which is a prolonged spiritual communion.

As the egoist, who is always thinking of himself, loves himself badly in every respect, the perfect man, who is almost always thinking of God, loves Him continually, no longer only by fleeing from sin, or by imitating the virtues of our Lord, but "by adhering to Him, by enjoying Him; and, as St. Paul says, he 'desires to be dissolved and to be with Christ.' " [2]

This adherence to God is a simple, direct act, which transforms a man's fundamental will and is at the basis of discursive and reflective acts. This adherence to God loved above all, not only as another self but more than self, contains the solution of the problem of the pure love of God harmonized with a legitimate love of self, for indeed the perfect man loves himself in God while loving God more than himself, and he desires heaven less for his personal happiness than that he may eternally glorify the divine goodness, the source of every created good. He tends more toward God Himself than toward the joy that will come to him from God.[3] This is pure love

[1] *Summa,* IIa IIae, q. 24, a. 9.

[•] God, objective beatitude, should evidently be loved for Himself, more than subjective beatitude, which is created and finite.

of God and of souls in God; it is apostolic zeal more ardent than ever, but humble, patient, and meek.

Here the soul grasps the profound meaning of the gradation contained in the statement of the precept of love according to Deuteronomy (6:5) and St. Luke (10:27): "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind." The beginner already loves God with his whole heart, occasionally receiving sensible consolations in prayer; next he loves God with his whole soul without consolation, placing all his activities at His service; later the advanced Christian loves God with all his strength, particularly in the trials of the night of the spirit; finally, on emerging from these trials, he loves the Lord with all his mind. The perfect man no longer rises only at rare intervals to this higher region of the soul; he is established there; he is spiritualized and supernaturalized; he has become "an adorer in spirit and in truth."

Consequently such souls almost always keep their peace even in the midst of the most painful and unforeseen circumstances, and they communicate it frequently to the most troubled. This is what causes St. Augustine to say that the beatitude of the peacemakers corresponds to the gift of wisdom, which, with charity, definitively predominates in the perfect. Their eminent model, after the holy soul of Christ, is the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Therefore it is evident that the spiritual age of the perfect is characterized by almost uninterrupted intimate conversation with God, loved purely above all, together with the ardent desire of making Him known and loved.

The Indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in the Purified Soul

Consideration of what characterizes the purified soul throws light on the nature of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in the perfect soul. In heaven the three divine Persons dwell in the beatified soul as in a temple where they are clearly known and loved. The Blessed Trinity is seen openly in the innermost depths of the beatified soul, which It preserves in existence and in consummated and inamissible grace. Each of the blessed is thus like a living tabernacle, like a consecrated host, endowed with supernatural knowledge and love.

The normal prelude to this life of heaven is realized on earth in the perfect soul that has reached the transforming union, which we shall describe farther on, following St. John of the Cross. Here we wish merely to point out that this close union is not essentially extraordinary, although very rare; but that it is the result of the mystery of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in every just soul?

The life of grace, which is the seed of glory, is essentially the same as the life of heaven. And since in heaven the Blessed Trinity is present in the souls of the blessed, where It is seen without any veil, It must already dwell in the just soul here on earth in the obscurity of faith, and according as the soul is more purified, it has a proportionately better experimental knowledge of this divine presence. As the soul is present to itself and knows itself experimentally as the principle of its acts, so it is given to it to know God as the principle of supernatural acts which it could not produce without His special inspiration.

And the purer the soul is, the more it distinguishes in itself what comes from itself with the general help of God and what can come only from the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Christ declares: "If anyone love Me, fie will keep My word. And My Father will love him, and We will come to him and will make Our abode with him." " "But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you." [6] St. John also says to his disciples: "His unction teacheth you of all things." [7] And St. Paul writes to the Romans: "For whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear; but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father). For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God." [8] Commenting on these words, St. Thomas says that the Holy Ghost gives us this testimony by the filial affection He inspires in us for Him. He thus makes Himself felt at times as the soul of our soul and the life of our life.

•Cf. St. Thomas, la, q.43, a. 3. We set forth this doctrine in Volume I, chapter 4 of this work.

•John 14:23.

• *Ibid., 26.*

' Cf. I John 2:27.

•Rom. 8:14-20.

It is especially through the gift of wisdom that we have the quasi-experimental knowledge of this divine presence. As St. Thomas explains,® this gift makes us, in fact, judge of divine things by a certain connaturalness with these things, by a sort of supernatural sympathy based on charity, and by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, who makes use of this sympathy, which He Himself has aroused, to make Himself felt by us. We thus taste the mysteries of salvation and the presence of God in us a little as the disciples of Emmaus did when they said: "Was not our heart burning within us, whilst He spoke in the way?" 10 What the disciples experienced was a quasi-experimental knowledge, superior to reasoning, analogous to that which the soul has of itself as the principle of its acts. God, the Author of grace and salvation, is closer to us than we are to ourselves, and He inspires in us the most profound acts to which we could not of ourselves move ourselves. In this way He makes Himself felt by us as the principle of our interior life.11

The term "quasi-experimental" is applied to this knowledge for two reasons: (i) because it does not attain God in an absolutely immediate manner, as happens in the beatific vision, but in the act of filial love which He produces in us; (2) because we cannot discern with absolute certitude these supernatural acts of love from the natural impulses of the heart that resemble them. Hence without a special revelation or an equivalent favor we cannot have absolute certainty of being in the state of grace.

The indwelling of the Blessed Trinity is permanent as long as habitual union with God lasts, from the fact of the state of grace; it is thus that it lasts even during sleep. But this habitual union is manifestly ordered to the actual union we have just spoken of, and even to the closest, to the transforming union, the prelude of that of heaven.

Consequently it is evident that in the purified soul the supernatural image of God appears more and more.12 By its nature the soul is already the image of God, since it is a spiritual substance, capable

• Cf. IIa IIae, q.45, a. 1, 2.

10 Luke 24:32.

11 In the language of the schools we would say: "The act of filial love, proceeding from the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, is at one and the same time that which is known, and that by which one knows without discourse God dwelling within and vivifying the soul." Thus we "taste" the revealed mystery of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in the just.

11 Cf. *Summa,* Ia, q.93, a. 3-8.

of intellectual knowledge and love. By habitual grace, the principle of the theological virtues, the soul is capable of supernatural knowledge and love of God. The more habitual grace and charity grow, the more they separate us from what is inferior and unite us to God. Finally, in heaven, consummated grace will enable us to see God immediately as He sees Himself and to love Him as He loves Himself. Then the supernatural image of God in us will be completed; inamissible charity will render us like the Holy Ghost, personal Love; the beatific vision will liken us to the Word, who, being the splendor of the Father, will make us like to Him. We can thus judge what should be even here on earth that perfect union, which is the proximate disposition to receive the beatific vision immediately after death without having to pass through purgatory. It is the secret of the lives of the saints.[18]

The Signs of the Indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in the Purified Soul

The signs of this indwelling are set forth at length by St. Thomas in the *Contra Gentes,*[14] and more briefly in the *Summa theologica*[15] where he asks whether a man can know if he is in the state of grace. Without having absolute certitude that he has grace, he has signs which enable him, for example, to approach the Holy Table without fear of making a sacrilegious Communion.

The principal signs of the state of grace, in ascending gradation, are the following.

The first sign is the testimony of a good conscience, in the sense that he is not conscious of any mortal sin. This is the fundamental sign, presupposed by the following signs which confirm it.

A second sign is joy in hearing the word of God preached, not only for the sake of hearing it, but to put it into practice. This may

[18] Sometimes this supernatural image of God and also of our Lord in the souls of the saints is manifested sensibly. For example, one day Blessed Raymond of Capua, the director of St. Catherine of Siena, questioning whether she was truly led by the Spirit of God, saw the features of his spiritual daughter change into those of our Lord. This was a sensible sign of the transforming union which the great mystics speak of. Likewise, St. Benedict Joseph Labre, in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, occasionally appeared to have our Lord's features. An artist, who had been trying for a long time to paint the face of Christ, was very much struck by this sight and sketched his features.

[14] Bk. IV, chaps. 11 f.

[15] Cf. la Ilae, q. 112, a. j.

be observed in several countries where there is preserved, together with a simple life, a great Christian faith which leads the faithful to listen willingly to their pastor when he explains the great truths of the Gospel.

A third sign, confirming the preceding ones, is the relish of divine wisdom, which leads a man to read the Gospel privately, to seek in it the spirit under the letter, to nourish his soul with it, even when it deals with the mystery of the cross and with the cross he must bear every day.

A fourth sign is the inclination leading the soul to converse intimately with God, and faithfully to resume this conversation when it has been interrupted. We cannot repeat too often that every man carries on an intimate conversation with himself, which, at times, is not good. True interior life begins, as we have often pointed out, when tliis intimate conversation is no longer only with self, but with God. St. Thomas says: "Friendship inclines a man to wish to converse with his friend. The conversation of man with God is made through the contemplation of God, according to these words of St. Paul: Our conversation is in heaven' (Phil. 3:20). And as the Holy Ghost gives us the love of God, He also inclines us to contemplate Him. That is why the Apostle also says: 'But we all beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord' " (II Cor. 3:18)?·

This is one of St. Thomas' texts which most clearly shows that in his opinion the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith is not something extraordinary, but something eminent in the normal way of sanctity.

The holy doctor says in the preceding chapter [17] that this intimate conversation with God is like the revelation of the most secret thoughts, in the sense that nothing in us is hidden from the Lord and that He Himself recalls to us the portion of the Gospel that should illumine the duty of every moment. There, says St. Thomas, we have an effect of friendship, "for it in a way unites two hearts in one, and what we reveal to a true friend seems not to have been said outside of ourselves." [18]

le Contra Gentes, Bk. IV, chap. 22.
lT Ibid., chap. 21.
l1 Ibid.

A fifth sign is to rejoice in God, fully consenting to His will even in adversity. Sometimes in the midst of dejection there is given us a pure and lofty joy which dissipates all sadness. This is a great sign of the Lord's visit. Moreover, Jesus, in promising the Holy Ghost, called Him the Paraclete, or Comforter. And normally we rejoice so much the more in the Lord as we more perfectly fulfill His precepts, for by so doing we form increasingly one sole heart with Him.

A sixth sign is found in the liberty of the children of God. On this subject, St. Thomas writes: "The children of God are led by the Holy Ghost, not like slaves, but like free creatures. . . . The Holy Ghost, in fact, makes us act by inclining our free will to will, for He gives us to love God and inclines us to act for love of Him and not through fear in a servile manner. That is why St. Paul tells us: 'You have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear; but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father). For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God.' [10] The Apostle also says: 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty' (II Cor. 3:17), deliverance from the slavery of sin, and 'If by the Spirit you mortify the deeds [and affections]of the flesh, you shall live' (Rom. 8:13)." [20] This is truly the deliverance or the holy liberty of the children of God, who reign with Him over inordinate desires, the spirit of the world, and the spirit of evil.

Lastly, a seventh sign of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in the soul, according to St. Thomas,[21] is that the person speaks of God out of the abundance of his heart. In this sense is realized what the holy doctor says elsewhere: "Preaching should spring from the plenitude of the contemplation of the mysteries of faith." [22] Thus, from Pentecost on, St. Peter and the apostles preached the mystery of the redemption; so too, St. Stephen, the first martyr, preached before being stoned; and likewise St. Dominic, who knew how to speak only with God or of God.

Thus the Holy Ghost appears increasingly as a source of ever new

»· Rom. 8:15 f. The Holy Ghost, who operates in us, excites this movement of filial love and thus gives us immediate testimony of our friendship with God and of our divine filiation. Cf. St. Thomas, *In Ep. ad Rom.,* 8:16.

30 Cf. *Contra Gentes,* Bk. IV, chap. 12, nos. 4f.

31 Ibid., chap. 21, no. 6.

"Summa, Ila Ilae, q. 188, a.ô.

graces, an unexhausted and inexhaustible source, "the source of living water springing up into life eternal," the source of light and love.

He is, as the saints say, our consolation in the sorrows of exile. A great hope is left to us in the present world crisis, for the hand of the Lord is not shortened. The numerous saints recently canonized evidence the fact that God is always rich in mercy. These saints, who are His great servants, furnish us with magnificent, and often imitable, examples of faith, hope, and love. Proof of this statement is found in the lives of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus, St. Gemma Galgani, St. John Bosco, St. Joseph Cottolengo, Blessed Anthony Mary Claret, St. Catherine Labouré, St. Louise de Marillac, St. Conrad of Parzham, the humble Capuchin lay brother in whom are so admirably fulfilled our Savior's words: "I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones" (Matt. 11:25).

In this spirit interior souls should consecrate themselves to the Holy Ghost in order to place themselves more profoundly under His direction and impulsion, and not allow so many of His inspirations to pass unperceived.

Good Christians consecrate themselves to the Blessed Virgin that she may lead them to our Lord, and to the Sacred Heart that Jesus may lead them to His Father. Particularly during the Pentecostal season, they should consecrate themselves to the Holy Ghost in order better to discern and follow His inspirations. With this intention they should repeat the beautiful prayer:

O Lux beatissima,
Reple cordis intima
Tuorum fidelium.

Sine tuo numine,
Nihil est in homine,
Nihil est innoxium.

Da virtutis meritum,
Da salutis exitum,
Da perenne gaudium.
Arnen.

CHAPTER XLI

A Form of Perfect Life: the Way of Spiritual Childhood

THE way of spiritual childhood taught by St. Teresa of Lisieux was highly praised on several occasions by Pope Benedict XV, and by Pope Pius XI who often expressed his confidence in the providential mission of the saint for the spiritual formation of souls in our day. The way of childhood which she recommends to us is explained by the innate qualities of the child, which should be found in an eminent degree in the child of God. There is in this idea a deep intuition in perfect harmony with what theology teaches on sanctifying grace, the infused virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. By recalling the innate qualities of the child, the principal virtues of the child of God, and what distinguishes spiritual childhood from natural childhood, we shall find great light on the doctrine of grace.

The Innate Qualities of the Child

What are ordinarily the innate qualities of a child? In spite of his little defects, we find in a child, as a rule, simplicity and consciousness of his weakness, especially if he has been baptized and is being raised in a Christian manner.

The simplicity, or the absence of duplicity, of a child is wholly spontaneous; in him there is no labored refinement, no affectation. He generally says what he thinks and expresses what he desires without subterfuge, without fear of what people will say. As a rule he does not pose; he shows himself as he is. Conscious of his weakness, for he can do nothing of himself, he depends in everything on his father and mother, from whom he should receive everything. This aware-

ness of his weakness is the seed of humility, which leads him to practice the three theological virtues, often in a profoundly simple manner.

At first the child spontaneously believes what his parents tell him; often they speak to him of God and teach him to pray. Innately the child has confidence in his parents, who teach him to hope in God even before he knows the formula of the act of hope, which he will soon read in his catechism and recite morning and evening. Finally, with all his heart the child loves his parents, to whom he owes everything; and if his father and mother are truly Christian, they lift the lively affection of this young heart toward God, our Lord, and His holy Mother. In this simplicity, this consciousness of his weakness, and this simple practice of the three theological virtues, there is the seed of the loftiest spiritual life. For this reason, when Jesus wished to teach His apostles the importance of humility, setting a little child in the midst of them He said: "Amen I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." [1] In recent years we have seen realized the prediction of Pope Pius X: "There will be saints among the children," called at an early age to frequent Communion.

Later on, during the awkward age, the child often loses his simplicity, the consciousness of his weakness, and wishes to act prematurely like a man; he gives evidence of pride and duplicity. And if he delights in speaking of certain virtues, it is less of the theological virtues titan of human virtues, like fortitude and courage, which lend importance to his budding personality, and a certain prudence which he does not know how to distinguish from false prudence, and which, in his attempt to hide disorders in his life, may turn into deceit.

The harsh experience of life then reminds him of his weakness; at times he meets with injustice, which shows him the value of a higher justice. He suffers from lies that are believed, thus discovering the value of uprightness. Finally, if he reflects, if he has not ceased to pray a little every day, he understands Christ's words: "Without Me you can do nothing," and the profound meaning of the Our Father again becomes apparent to him. He repeats this prayer of his childhood, sometimes spending ten minutes saying the Our Fa-

1 Mact. 18:3.

ther once from the depths of his heart. He has again found the road of salvation.

The Principal Virtues of the Child of God

St. Teresa of the Child Jesus reminds us that the principal virtues of the child of God are those in which are reproduced in an eminent degree the innate qualities of the child, minus his defects. Consequently the way of spiritual childhood will teach us to be supematurally ourselves minus our defects.

The child of God should, first of all, be simple and upright, without duplicity; he should exclude hypocrisy and falsehood from his life, and not seek to pass for what he is not, as our Lord declares in the Sermon on the Mount: "If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome": [2] that is, if the gaze of your spirit is honest, if your intention is upright, your whole life will be illumined.

The child of God should preserve the consciousness of his weakness and indigence; he should constantly recall that God our Father freely created him from nothing, and that without God's grace he can do absolutely nothing in the order of sanctification and salvation. If the child of God grows in this humility, he will have an ever deeper faith in the divine word, greater even than little children have in the words of their parents. He will have a faith devoid of human respect, he will be proud of his faith; and from time to time it will become in him penetrating and sweet, above all reasoning. He will truly live by the mysteries of salvation and will taste them; he will contemplate them with admiration, as a little child looks into the eyes of his beloved father.

If the child of God does not go astray, he will see his hope grow stronger from day to day and become transformed into trusting abandonment to Providence. In proportion to his fidelity to the duty of the moment, to the signified divine will, will be his abandonment to the divine good pleasure as yet unknown. The arms of the Lord are, says St. Teresa of the Child Jesus, like a divine elevator that lifts man up to God.

Finally, the child of God grows steadily in the love of his Father. He loves Him for Himself and not simply for His benefits, as a little child loves his mother more than the caresses he receives from

[2] Matt. *6:22.*

her. The child of God loves his Father in trial as in joy; when life is difficult, he remembers that he should love the Lord with all his strength and even with all his mind, and be always united to Him in the higher part of his soul as an adorer "in spirit and in truth."

This last characteristic shows that the way of spiritual childhood often demands courage in trial, the virtue of Christian fortitude united to the gift of fortitude. This is especially evident toward the end of the life of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus[3] when she had to pass through the tunnel, which St. John of the Cross calls the night of the spirit. She passed through this profound darkness with admirable faith, praying for unbelievers, with perfect abandonment and most pure and ardent charity, which led her to the transforming union, the immediate prelude of eternal life.

The way of childhood thus understood wonderfully harmonizes several seemingly contradictory virtues: meekness and fortitude, and also simplicity and prudence, to which Jesus referred when He said to His apostles: "Behold I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents and simple as doves."

We must be prudent with the world, which is often perverse; we must also be strong, at times even to martyrdom, as in Spain and Mexico in recent years. But to have this superior prudence and fortitude, we need the gifts of counsel and fortitude, and to have them we must be increasingly simple and childlike toward God, our Lord, and the Blessed Virgin. The less we should be children in our dealings with men, the more we should become children of God. From Him alone can come the fortitude and prudence we need in the struggles of today: we must hope in God and divine grace more than in the strength of popular movements; and should this force stray farther and farther into the way of atheistic communism, we should continue to resist even to martyrdom, placing our trust in God like a little child in the goodness of his father. Father H. Petitot, O.P., in his book, *St. Teresa of Lisieux: a Spirittial Renascence,* emphasizes this intimate union of virtues so contrary in appearance in St. Teresa of Lisieux.

Another point of capital importance is that when well understood the way of spiritual childhood wonderfully harmonizes also true humility with the desire for the loving contemplation of the mysteries of salvation. Thereby we see that this contemplation,

• *Histoire d'une âme,* chap. 9.

which proceeds from living faith illumined by the gifts of understanding and wisdom, is in the normal way of sanctity. This penetrating and at times sweet contemplation of the mysteries of faith is not something extraordinary like visions, revelations, and the stigmata, extrinsic favors, so to speak, which we do not find in the life of St. Teresa of Lisieux; it is, on the contrary, the normal fruit of sanctifying grace, called the grace of the virtues and the gifts and the seed of glory. It is the normal prelude of eternal life. This point of doctrine stands out clearly in the writings of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus. She makes us desire and ask the Lord for this loving contemplation of the mysteries of the Incarnation, the redemption, the Eucharist, the Mass, and the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in our souls.

What Distinguishes Spiritual Childhood from Natural Childhood

Lastly, in her teaching on the way of spiritual childhood, St. Teresa sets forth clearly what constitutes the distinction between spiritual and natural childhood. Differentiating between them, St. Paul tells us: "Do not become children in sense. But in malice be children; and in sense be perfect."[4] Consequently maturity of judgment first of all distinguishes spiritual from natural childhood. But there is also a character to which St. Francis de Sales[5] draws attention. In the natural order, in proportion as the child grows, the more self-sufficient he should become, for some day he will no longer have his parents. In the order of grace, on the contrary, the more the child of God grows, the more he understands that he will never be self-sufficient and that he depends intimately on God. As he matures, he should live more by the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, who, by His seven gifts, supplies for the imperfections of his virtues to such an extent that he is finally more passive under the divine action than given up to his personal activity. In the end he will enter into the bosom of the Father where he will find his beatitude.

A young person, on reaching maturity, leaves his parents to begin life for himself. The middle-aged man occasionally pays a visit to

[4] Cf. I Cor. 14:20.
[5] *Treatise on the Love of God,* Bk. IX, chaps. 13 f.

his mother, but he no longer depends on her as he formerly did; instead, it is he who supports her. On the contrary, as the child of God grows up, he becomes so increasingly dependent on his Father that he no longer desires to do anything without Him, without His inspirations or His counsels. Then his whole life is bathed in prayer; he has obtained the best part, which will not be taken away from him. He understands that he must pray always.

This doctrine, at once so simple and so lofty, is set forth in detail in the following page from St. Teresa of Lisieux:

> To remain little is to recognize one's nothingness, to expect everything from God, as a little child expects everything from his father; it is to be disturbed about nothing, not to earn a fortune.
>
> Even among poor people, as long as the child is quite small, they give him what he needs; but as soon as he has grown up, his father no longer wishes to feed him and says to him: "Work now, you can be self-supporting." Well, so as never to hear that, I have not wished to grow up, since I feel myself incapable of earning my living, the eternal life of heaven. I have, therefore, always remained little, having no other occupation than to gather the flowers of love and sacrifice and to offer them to God for His pleasure.
>
> To be little also means not to attribute to oneself the virtues that one practices, believing oneself capable of something; but it means recognizing that God places this treasure of virtue in the hand of His little child that he may make use of it when necessity arises; and it is always God's treasure.·

This is likewise the teaching of St. Augustine, when he affirms that, in crowning our merits, God crowns His own gifts. This is also what the Council of Trent says: "So great is God's goodness toward us that He wills that His gifts should become merits in us." 7 We can offer Him only what we receive from Him; but what we receive under the form of grace, we offer to Him under the form of merit, adoration, prayer, reparation, and thanksgiving.

St. Teresa adds: "Finally, to be little is not to become discouraged by one's sins, for children often fall, but they are too little to do themselves much harm."

In all this spiritual teaching appears the great doctrine of grace: "Without Me you can do nothing"; "What hast thou that thou hast

• *Histoire d'une âme,* "Souvenirs et conseils," p. 163.
' Sess. VI, chap. 16.

not received?" St. Teresa lived this lofty doctrine, on which the fathers of the Church and theologians have written so much. She lived it in a very simple and profound manner, allowing the Holy Ghost to lead her, above human reasoning, toward the harbor of salvation, to which she, in her turn, leads many sinners. Happy indeed the theologian who shall have converted as many souls as our saint! The Anglican preacher, Vernon Johnson, was not converted by theologians or by exegetes, but by St. Teresa of the Child Jesus.

St. Gregory the Great expressed his admiration for this way of childhood when he wrote in a homily, which the breviary recalls in the common for virgin martyrs: "When we see young maidens gain the kingdom of heaven by the sword, what do we say, we who are bearded and weak, we who allow ourselves to be dominated by wrath, inflated by pride, disturbed by ambition?"

Truly St. Teresa of Lisieux traced for us the simple road which leads to great heights. In her teaching, as it pleased Pope Pius XI to point out, the gift of wisdom appears in a lofty degree for the direction of souls thirsting for the truth and wishing, above all human conceptions, to live by the word of God.§

• The way of childhood thus understood, especially as we see it toward the end of the life of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus, is very elevated in its simplicity. Its lofty simplicity comes home to us because the saint certainly passed through the night of the spirit (which corresponds to the sixth mansion of § Teresa of Avila), as may be seen on reading chapter nine of *theHistoire d une âme.* It was the reading of this chapter, some thirty years ago, that gave us the idea of explaining the night of the spirit by a profound and intense influence of the gift of understanding, which brings out in powerful relief the formal motive of humility and of each of the three theological virtues. Thereby these infused virtues are purified of all alloy or attachment to secondary and accessory motives on which until then the soul had dwelt excessively. Cf. *szipra,* chapter 39 on the effects of the passive purification of the spirit.

SECTION Ji

The Heroic Degree of the Virtues

TO apprehend clearly what the unitivc way should be in the full and strong sense of the term, we must treat of the heroic degree of the virtues in general, and more particularly of each of the theological virtues that chiefly constitute our life of union with God. With this intention, we shall also consider devotion to Jesus crucified and to Mary in the unitivc way.

CHAPTER XLII

The Heroic Degree of the Virtues in General

MORE perfectly to characterize the spiritual age of the perfect, we shall discuss at this point the heroic degree of the virtues which the Church requires for the beatification of the servants of God.[1]

Heroic virtue commences even in the illuminative way, which begins by the passive purification of the senses, in which there are heroic acts of chastity and patience. With still greater reason it exists in the passive purification of the spirit, which introduces the soul into the unitive way. As we have seen, during this trial the soul must make heroic acts of the theological virtues in order to resist temptations against faith and hope. But this heroic degree manifests itself still more when the soul emerges from this trial into the unitive way of the perfect. We even pointed out earlier in this work that these two nights of the senses and the spirit are like two tunnels whose darkness is quite disconcerting. When we see a soul emerge from the first tunnel and with greater cause from the second with manifestly heroic virtues, it is a sign that the soul has successfully traversed these dark passages, that it did not go astray, or that, if in them it committed some sins, like the Apostle Peter during our Savior's passion, divine grace raised it up again and led it to still greater humility, a greater mistrust of self, and a firmer hope in God.

We shall discuss first the distinctive marks of heroic virtue, then the connection of the virtues in relation to their heroic degree. In

[1] On this subject, consult Benedict XIV: *De servorum Dei beatificatione,* III, chaps, *ii* f., on how the examination into the heroic degree of the virtues of the servants of God should be made in view of beatification.

the following chapters we shall treat of the heroic degree of the theological and moral virtues in the perfect.

The Distinctive Marks of Heroic Virtue

On this subject St. Thomas says in his *Commentary on St. Matthew,* apropos of the evangelical beatitudes, which are the most perfect acts of the infused virtues and of the gifts: "Common virtue perfects man in a human manner, heroic virtue gives him a superhuman perfection. When a courageous man fears where he should fear, it is a virtue; if he did not fear in such circumstances, it would be temerity. But if he no longer fears anything, because he relies on the help of God, then it is a superhuman or divine virtue." [2] It is these heroic virtues that are spoken of in the evangelical beatitudes: blessed are the poor in spirit, the meek, those who weep over their sins, those who hunger and thirst after justice, the merciful, the clean of heart, the peacemakers, those who suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you untruly, for My sake."

The true Christian notion of heroic virtue is expressed in these words of our Savior and in the commentary on them given us by the fathers of the Church, in particular by St. Augustine.[3] St. Thomas explains this traditional idea in the *Summa*[*] where he distinguishes between the social virtues, the perfecting virtues, and those of the purified soul; and also where he treats of the beatitudes.

After treating of the acquired virtues of the good citizen (social virtues), St. Thomas describes the infused perfecting virtues as follows: "These virtues . . . are virtues of men who are on their way and tending toward the divine similitude; and these are called perfecting virtues. Thus prudence by contemplating the things of God, counts as nothing all things of the world, and directs all the thoughts of the soul to God alone; temperance, so far as nature allows, neglects the needs of the body; fortitude prevents the soul from being afraid of neglecting the body and rising to heavenly things; and justice consists in the soul giving a whole-hearted consent to follow the way thus proposed."

[2] *Commentary on Matt.* lect. i.
[3] *De sermone Domini in monte,* Bk. I, chap. 4.
[*] Cf. la Ilae, q.61, a.j; q.69.

In a higher degree, these same infused virtues are called virtues of the fully purified soul; they are those of great saints on earth and of the blessed in heaven. "Thus prudence sees naught else but the things of God (the rules of our conduct); temperance knows no earthly desires (after having often overcome them); fortitude has no knowledge of passion (as in the martyrs); and justice, by imitating the divine Mind, is united thereto by an everlasting covenant." [6]

Treating of the beatitudes, St. Thomas [8] tells us that, as meritorious acts, they are the highest acts of the infused virtues and of the gifts, and that their reward is here on earth the prelude of eternal life *{aliqua inchoatio beatitudinis).* He distinguishes those of the flight from sin, which is attached to wealth, pleasure, earthly power; those of the active life (the thirst after justice and mercy), and those of the contemplative life (purity of heart, radiating peace); the highest contains all the preceding in the midst even of persecution.

This traditional teaching on the distinctive marks of heroic virtue is summed up by Benedict XIV when he says: "Four things are required for proven or manifest heroic virtue: (1) the matter or object should be difficult, above the common strength of man; (2) the acts should be accomplished promptly, easily; (3) they should be performed with holy joy; (4) they should be accomplished quite frequently, when the occasion to do so presents itself." [7]

The heroic degree of virtue is therefore superior to the common way of acting of even virtuous souls. Heroic virtue is present when one practices all one's duties with ease and spontaneity, even in particularly difficult circumstances.

The different signs pointed out by Benedict XIV should be clearly understood in relation to the subject who practices heroic virtue. Thus, what is difficult for a ten-year-old child is what is above the ordinary strength of children of his age; likewise, what is difficult for an old man differs in a measure from what is hard for a man in his prime.

The second distinctive mark, promptness and facility, is understood especially in regard to the higher part of the soul; it does

• ***Ibid.***
* ***Ibid.,*** q.69.
' ***De servorum Dei beatiflcatione,*** Bk. IП, chap. 21.

not exclude difficulty in the less elevated part, as the mystery of Gethsemane shows. That the holocaust may be perfect, there must be suffering involved and great difficulty to be overcome; but heroic charity promptly surmounts them.

Likewise holy joy, the third sign, is that of the sacrifice to be accomplished, and does not exclude sorrow and sadness; it is even at times accompanied by extreme dejection, which is religiously offered to God. The joy of suffering for our Lord even increases with suffering, and for that reason it is the sign of a very great grace.

The fourth mark, frequency in the accomplishment of such acts when the occasion demands it, greatly confirms the preceding ones and shows tested heroic virtue.

The heroic degree of virtue is especially evident in martyrdom undergone with faith for love of God; but outside of martyrdom, this heroic degree is often manifest, and at times in a striking manner. This was the case especially in the life of Jesus before His passion, as shown by His humility, meekness, abnegation, magnanimity, and even more so by His immense charity toward all, the charity of the supreme Shepherd of souls who is preparing to give His life for them.

An example of heroic virtue outside of martyrdom is frequently found in the saints, in their pardon of injuries, in their admirable charity toward those who persecute them. For example, one day a spiteful man seeing St. Benedict Joseph Labre passing by, hurled a sharp stone at him; the stone struck the servant of God on the ankle, and the blood gushed forth. The saint immediately bent down, picked up the stone, kissed it, doubtless praying for the man who had thrown it, and then placed the stone at the edge of the road so that it would injure no one else. Still another example is Henry Mary Boudon, archdeacon of Evreux, counselor of his bishop and of many other bishops of France, and the author of excellent spiritual books. As the result of a calumnious letter to the bishop of his diocese, he was forbidden to celebrate Mass and to hear confessions. On receipt of this prohibition, he immediately threw himself at the feet of his crucifix and thanked God for this grace, of which he judged himself unworthy. His action is an example of perfect promptness in the acceptance of the cross.

Such examples could be endlessly multiplied. St. Louis Bertrand remained calm in the midst of great dangers. On one occasion when

he perceived that he had drunk a poisoned beverage offered to him, he remained in peace and trusted to God. In the midst of sharp pain, he did not lament, but said to God: "Lord, now burn and cut that Thou mayest spare me in eternity."

We should note that in heroic virtue the happy mean is far higher than in ordinary virtue. In proportion as the acquired virtue of fortitude grows, without deviating to the right or the left toward contrary vices, its happy mean rises. Higher up still is found the happy mean of the infused virtue of fortitude, which itself rises progressively. Finally, still more elevated is the superior measure of the gift of fortitude, dictated by the Holy Ghost. Now, heroic virtue is exercised conjointly with the corresponding gift and, as it is thus placed at the service of charity, something of the impulse of this theological virtue is found in it.

Moreover, as the acts of the gifts depend on the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the Christian hero remains very humble like a child of God who continually looks toward his Father. In this respect he differs notably from the hero who is conscious of his personal strength, like the Stoic, and who aims at great things or exalts his personality instead of allowing the Lord to reign profoundly in him.

The distinctive marks of heroic virtue are dominated by charity toward those who make one suffer and by prayer for them. This consideration leads us to discuss the connection of the virtues from this higher point of view.

The Connection of the Virtues and Their Heroic Degree

To discern more clearly between heroic virtue, which comes from a great help from God, and certain deceptive appearances, we must consider, besides the four distinctive marks already indicated, the connection of the virtues in prudence and charity. Prudence, the driver of the virtues, directs the moral virtues that it may kindle in our sensible appetites and will the light of right reason and faith. We saw earlier in our study that in this work of direction acquired prudence is at the service of infused. Charity, on its part, directs the acts of all the other virtues to God loved supremely, making them meritorious. This is why all the virtues, being connected in

prudence and charity, grow together, says St. Thomas, like the five fingers of the hand, like the different parts of one and the same organism.§ This point of doctrine is of primary importance in discerning heroic virtues, for there is extraordinary difficulty in practicing, especially at the same time, seemingly contradictory virtues, like fortitude and meekness, simplicity and prudence, perfect truthfulness and the discretion which knows how to keep a secret.

Difficulty in practicing simultaneously virtues that are so unlike springs from the fact that each one of us is determined by his temperament in one direction rather than in another. A person naturally inclined to meekness is but little inclined to fortitude; a naturally simple person sometimes carries simplicity to naïveté and a lack of prudence; one who is very frank does not know how to answer an indiscreet question relative to something about which he should keep silent; one who is inclined to mercy will at times lack the firmness which justice or the defense of truth demands. Each one's temperament is determined in one direction; *natura determinatur ad unum,* the ancients used to say. All must climb toward the summit of perfection by opposite slopes; the meek must learn to become strong, and the strong to become meek. Thus the acquired and the infused virtues should complete man's excellent natural inclinations and combat the numerous defects which sully his moral character. Were we to count all the virtues annexed to the moral and theological virtues, we would discover that there are about forty of them to be practiced, and that each one occupies a middle position between two opposing defects to be avoided, as fortitude between cowardliness and temerity. It is essential to know how to play the keyboard of the virtues without sounding false notes, without confounding meekness with pusillanimity, and magnanimity with pride.

Hence the importance of the connection of the virtues and the difficulty there is in practicing them all at the same time, or practically so, in order that the equilibrium or harmony of moral fife may be preserved *fortiter et suaviter.*

It also follows that a virtue exists in the heroic degree only if the others exist in a proportionate degree, at least in *praeparatione animi,* that is, in such a way that they can be practiced should the occasion

**Summa,* Ia IIae, q.6j, a. 1-3; q.6<S, a. 2; q.68, a. j.

arise. Thus the deeper the root of a tree is, the loftier is the highest of its branches.®

Therefore one must possess lofty charity, eminent love of God and neighbor, and also great prudence, aided by the gift of counsel, in order to have simultaneously a high degree of fortitude and meekness, perfect love of truth and justice joined to great mercy for those who have gone astray. God alone, who unites all perfections in Himself, can grant that His servants unite them also in their lives. This is why St. Paul asserts this connection when he says of the charity poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost: "Charity is patient, is kind: charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." [10]

Likewise Benedict XIV declares: "The heroic degree, properly so called, demands the connection of all the moral virtues, and although pagans have excelled in one virtue or another, like love of country, it is not evident that they had the heroic degree properly so called, which cannot be conceived without great love of God and neighbor and the other virtues which accompany charity." [11]

This admirable harmony of the virtues appears especially in our Lord, particularly during the Passion. In Him, together with His heroic love of God and immense mercy for sinners, which led Him to pray for His executioners, we see the greatest love of truth and uncompromising justice. In Him are united the most profound humility and the loftiest magnanimity, heroic fortitude in self-

* Two observations are essential here: (1) It would be imprudent to affirm too hastily the heroic degree of a particular virtue in a servant of God and then to deduce, as it were a priori, that he must also have the other virtues in a heroic degree. To affirm the heroic quality of one of them without rash haste, the elevation of the others must have already been considered.

(2) Although the virtues grow together, especially the infused virtues, a given servant of God has a greater natural or acquired disposition for the practice, for example, of fortitude than for that of meekness, or inversely. In addition, there are servants of God who, by reason of a special mission, receive actual graces which incline them more particularly to the exercise of one virtue than to that of another. Cf. St. Thomas, la Ilae, q.66, a. 2, corp., and ad 2um.

10 Cf. 1 Cor. 13:4-7.

11 ***Op. cit.,*** III, chap. 21.

forgetfulness and the greatest meekness. Our Savior's humanity thus appears as the spotless mirror in which the divine perfections are reflected.[12]

The connection of the virtues likewise enables us to distinguish, as Benedict XIV points out,[13] between true and false martyrs. The latter endure their torments through pride and obstinacy in error, whereas only true martyrs unite to heroic fortitude that meekness which leads them, in imitation of our Lord, to pray for their executioners. In their martyrdom, St. Stephen and St. Peter Martyr exemplified this teaching, showing us, in consequence, that their constancy was true Christian fortitude, united to the gift of fortitude, in the service of faith and charity. In them especially we have living examples of the four characteristics of heroic virtue explained above: to accomplish very difficult acts, promptly, with holy joy, and not only once, but every time that circumstances demand such action. To act in this manner requires a special intervention on the part of God who sustains His servants and who, in extreme circumstances, gives extreme graces.

We must insist on the point that the heroic degree of virtue thus defined is relative to different ages of life.[14] Heroic virtue in children is judged in relation to the common strength of virtuous children of the same age. If certain grown persons are morally very small, there are little children who by reason of their virtues are very mature. Scripture declares: "Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings Thou hast perfected praise."[15] Christ reminded the chief priests and the scribes of this passage when they grew indignant at the children who were crying in the temple: "Hosanna to the Son of David."[16] And if the faith of little ones is at times an example for their elders, as much must be said of their confidence and love.

An example of such virtue is the heroism of little four-year-old Nellie of Ireland, whose well-known life written some years ago, aroused wonder and delight in Pope Pius X.[17] Tortured by caries

12 Cf. St. Francis de Sales, *Second Sermon for the Visitation, Explanation of the Magnificat:* The union of profound humility and lofty charity.

13 *Op. cit.,* chap. 20.

14 We treated this subject at greater length in "L'héroïcité de la vertu chez les enfants" (Anne de Guigné), *La Vie spirituelle,* January 1, 1935, pp. 34-52.

15 Ps. 8:3.

16 Matt. 21:15 f.

17 Father Bernard des Ronces, *Nellie* (Maison du Bon-Pasteur, Paris).

of the bone which ate away her jaw, she used to press her crucifix to her heart in order to endure her sufferings; tears streaming down her cheeks, she accepted all her suffering, repeating unceasingly: "See how Holy God suffered for me!"

In 1909 little Guglielmina Tacchi Marconi, known in Pisa for her extraordinary love for the poor, died just as heroically.[18] In the streets she used to watch for the poor in order to assist them; at table she could not eat if they lacked anything. She died at the age of eleven, after seven months of torture by endocarditis; throughout this period she was never guilty of a pout or a caprice. From the very first day, though she was never again to know an hour of peaceful sleep, she contented herself with repeating with great confidence: "All for the love of Jesus!" After her first Communion, made just before she died, she remained for a long time as if in ecstasy, and died exclaiming: "Come, Jesus, come."

Another striking example is the martyrdom of the three little Japanese boys, canonized by Pope Pius IX in 1862. One of them, thirteen years of age, made the following reply to the governor who urged him to apostatize: "How foolish I would be to give up today certain and eternal goods for uncertain and passing goods!" Another, Louis Ibragi, twelve years of age, died on his cross singing the *Laudate, pueri, Dominum.*™

On reading the account of these heroic acts performed by children from ten to twelve years of age and even less, and recalling the sublime words that several of them uttered before dying, one recognizes in them a wisdom incomparably superior in its simplicity and humility to the often pretentious complexity of human knowledge. In it is evident an eminent degree of the gift of wisdom, proportionate to the charity of these little servants of God, who were great by the heroic testimony they gave Him even unto death.[20]

[18] Myriam de G., *Guglielmina,* 1898-1909 (Paris).

[18] These and many other similar facts are related in a book written with great love of God: *Mes Benjamins,* Myriam de G., Italian transi., Turin.

[20] It should be noted that in the innocence of the baptized child the Holy Ghost has not much to purify before communicating His light of life and attracting power. There are, to be sure, certain consequences of original sin, which, after baptism, are like wounds in the process of healing; but they are not poisoned by repeated personal sins. The Holy Ghost dispenses the child that is faithful to grace in the accomplishment of the duties proper to its age from the painful purifications necessary, according to the degree of their guilt, for Christians who have sinned. Such a child may rise to great heights of virtue.

CHAPTER XLIII

Heroic and Contemplative Faith

"This is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith."
I John 5:4

SINCE we have studied the heroic degree of the virtues in general, it will be profitable next to consider that of faith and the principal virtues in particular. We shall thus form an accurate idea of perfect Christian life according to the common teaching of the Church. There is no room for discussion in these matters, for they are the great common grounds of sanctity on which all theologians agree.

This description of the signs of the heroic degree of the principal virtues may be very useful in the beatification of the servants of God. A knowledge of these signs will also make clear why in these causes the Church does not seek to establish whether the servants of God in question had infused contemplation under a more or less determined form; it is sufficient to see that they had heroic faith, the signs of which we shall examine, since in them are often visible the fruits of contemplation, which makes such souls live in an almost continual conversation with God.

Heroic faith is not only the living faith, vivified by charity, which is found in all the just; it is eminent faith which has for its principal characters *firmness* of adherence to the most obscure mysteries, *promptness* in the rejection of error, *penetration,* which makes it contemplate all things in the light of divine revelation, while living profoundly by revealed mysteries.[1] Thereby it is vic-

[1] Firmness in adherence comes from infused faith itself; promptness in rejecting error and penetration come especially from the gift of understanding, so far as it perfects faith. Cf. IIa IIae, q.8, a. 1, 3.

torious over the spirit of the world, as is evident especially in times of persecution?

The Firmness of Its Adherence

When we spoke of the passive purification of the spirit, we saw that faith must be very firm to overcome the strong temptations which then present themselves. We stated,[3] on the one hand, that during this painful period the gift of understanding vividly enlightens the soul on the grandeur of the divine perfections, on infinite justice, as well as on the gratuitous character of the favors of mercy toward the elect. In consequence the soul asks itself how infinite justice can be intimately harmonized with infinite mercy. On the other hand, the devil tells it that infinite justice is excessively rigorous and that mercy is arbitrary. But the faithful soul, which is purified in this crucible, rises above these temptations, and divine grace convinces it that the darkness found in these mysteries comes from a light too great for the weak eyes of the spirit. Hence, in spite of the fluctuations of the lower part of the intellect, at its summit faith not only remains firm but daily grows stronger. In this darkness it rises toward the heights of God, just as at night we glimpse the heights of the firmament, which remain invisible during the day.

This firmness of faith then manifests itself more and more by love for the word of God contained in Holy Scripture, by the cult of tradition preserved in the writings of the fathers, by perfect adherence to even the most minute details of the doctrine proposed by the Church, by docility to the directions of the supreme shepherd, the vicar of Jesus Christ. This firmness of faith appears especially in the martyrs, and also, during great conflicts of opinion, in those who, far from vacillating, are capable of sacrificing their self-love in order to keep immutably to the right road.

In the practical order, this firmness of perfect faith is also evident when the servants of God, faced with the most painful and unforeseen events, are not astonished at the unsearchable ways of Providence, disconcerting to reason. Of this firm faith Abraham

[3] Cf. Philip of the Blessed Trinity, *Suimna theol. mysticae* (ed. 1874), III, IJiff.

• Cf. chap. jç.

gave evidence when he prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac, in spite of the fact that God Himself had promised him that from this son was to spring his posterity, the multitude of believers. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, St. Paul says: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered Isaac: and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son. . . . Accounting that God is able to raise up even from the dead. Whereupon also he received him." * This was a remote figure of the sacrifice of Christ.

This heroic obedience emanated from heroic faith. In the practical affairs of daily life as well as in the mysteries which we must believe, the obscurity of certain ways of God comes from a light too strong for our weak eyes. So in the life of Christ, His passion was at one and the same time the darkest hour, considered from a worldly point of view, and the most luminous from a spiritual point of view. This is what made St. Philip Neri say with admirable firmness of faith: "I thank Thee, Lord God, with all my heart that things are not going as I wish, but as Thou dost." In Isaias the Lord says: "My thoughts are not your thoughts: nor your ways My ways." † These words are sometimes quoted to emphasize the disconcerting character of certain ways of God; but in this passage of Isaias, it is a question especially of the divine mercy which comes to us in these astounding ways. In the same chapter the Lord says: "All you that thirst, come to the waters. . . . Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God; for He is bountiful to forgive. . . . And as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and return no more thither, but soak the earth, . . . so shall My word be, which shall go forth from My mouth. It shall not return to Me void, but it shall do whatsoever I please. . . . For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace." ‡ The firmness of the faith of the true servants of God makes them see, but a little indistinctly, that the most disconcerting trials are directed by Providence to their sanctification, their salvation, and that of many souls.

*Heb. 11:17, 19.
† Isa. 55:8.
‡ Isa. 55:1, 7,10-ii.

Promptness in Rejecting Error

Heroic and contemplative faith is characterized not only by firmness in adherence, but by promptness in rejecting error. It not only immediately spurns the false maxims of the world that cloak themselves in deceiving formulas, but it quickly perceives errors that are small in appearance, but that may become the cause of a great deviation; a slight deviation at the summit of an angle becomes great when its sides are prolonged. Thus, for example, when Jansenism was leading some theologians astray, St. Vincent de Paul, through his great spirit of faith, immediately grasped the error of this doctrine, so opposed to the divine mercy, which kept the faithful away from Holy Communion. He denounced this error to Rome through love for the word of God, which it altered, and for souls, which it was leading astray.

Promptness in rejecting every source of deviation is shown in the practical order by the way a person makes his confession, that is, without routine, with a clear view of his sins, and perfect sincerity that avoids every attenuation, as if he were reading in the book of life, which will be open to his gaze after death.

Promptness of faith in rejecting error causes the servants of God great suffering when they see souls being lost. After disciplining himself for those to whom he was to preach, St. Dominic used often to say in his nocturnal prayers: "O my God, what will become of sinners?"

Thence is born great zeal for the propagation of the faith in the missions and in countries where faith was once alive but now is lamentably declining. This zeal is ardent but not bitter or harsh; it manifests itself chiefly by fervent and almost continual prayer, which should be the soul of the apostolate.

The Penetration Which Causes Everything to Be Seen in the Light of Revelation

Perfect faith makes the soul see everything in the light of Scripture and, as it were, with the eye of God. Possessed of this degree of faith, it secs with increasing clearness all that has been revealed about the majesty of God, the divine perfections, the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, the redeeming Incarnation, the intimate life

of the Church, and eternal life. Under the same supernatural light, with increasing clarity the soul sees itself, its qualities, and its weaknesses, and also the value of graces received. Similarly, in peace it considers other souls, their frailty and their generosity; hence it judges agreeable or painful events in relation to the end of our journey toward eternity. Judgment rises above sensible things and above the purely rational aspect of these events in order to attain, though indistinctly, God's supernatural plan.

St. Catherine of Siena often insists on this point in her *Dialogue.* Speaking of the perfect, the Lord says there:

> She [the soul] would be illuminated to see that I, the primary and sweet Truth, grant condition, and time, and place, and consolations, and tribulations as they may be needed for your salvation, and to complete the perfection to which I have elected the soul. And she would see that I give everything through love, and that, therefore, with love and reverence she should receive everything.'
>
> Those who belong to the third state . . . deem themselves worthy of the troubles and stumblingblocks caused them by the world, and of the privation of their own consolation, and indeed of whatever circumstance happens to them. . . . They have known and tasted in the light My eternal will, which wishes naught else but your good, and gives and permits these troubles in order that you should be sanctified in Me.' . . .
>
> With this light the souls in the unitive state love Me, because love follows the intellect, and the more it knows the more can it love. Thus the one feeds the other.'

The perfect soul thus attains to a penetrating faith, which enters the depths of the mystery of Christ, of the Son of God made man and crucified for our salvation. We read on this subject in the same *Dialogue:* "Such as these follow the Immaculate Lamb, My only-begotten Son, who was both blessed and sorrowful on the cross. He was sorrowful in that He bore the cross of the body, suffering pain and the cross of desire, in order to satisfy for the guilt of the human race, and He was blessed because the divine nature, though united with the human, could suffer no pain, but always kept His soul in a state of blessedness, being revealed without a veil to her." [10] Likewise, says St. Catherine of Siena, the intimate friends of the

' *The Dialogue,* chap. 99.
• *Ibid.,* chap. 100.
• *Ibid.,* chap. 85.
[10] *Ibid.,* chap. 78.

Lord Jesus suffer at the sight of sin, which offends God and ravages souls, but they are happy at the same time because no one can take away their charity, which constitutes their happiness and beatitude. Thus to the gaze of the servants of God there appear more clearly the infinite value of the Mass, the worth of the real presence of our Savior in the tabernacle, the grandeur of the intimate life of the Church, which lives by the thought, the love, the will of Christ. Everything takes on a true value in the liturgy, which is like the song of the Spouse accompanying the great prayer of Christ, perpetuated by the sacrifice of our altars.

This penetrating and contemplative faith leads man to rejoice in the triumphs of the Church, to see in men not rivals or indifferent persons, but brothers bought by the blood of Christ, members of His mystical body. St. Vincent de Paul, going to the assistance of abandoned children or of prisoners condemned to the galleys, had a high degree of contemplative faith which inspired his whole apostolate.

Perfect faith leads the just man always to base his decisions not on human but on supernatural motives. It gives life a superior radiant simplicity, which is like the reflection of the divine simplicity. Sometimes it shines forth on the countenances of the saints, which are as if illumined by a celestial light. One day St. Dominic, all unsuspecting, escaped an ambush prepared by his adversaries to bring about his death. When those who were awaiting him in a lonely place in order to kill him, saw him approaching, they were so struck by the light illuminating his countenance that they did not dare to lay hands on him. St. Dominic was thus saved, as someone has said, by his contemplation, which radiated over his features; and with him was saved the Order he was to found.

The Victory of Heroic Faith over the Spirit of the World

St. John writes in his First Epistle: "Whatsoever is bom of God overcometh the world. And this is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that bclieveth that Jesus is the Son of God?" [11]

The victory of heroic faith appears even in the Old Testament,

11 Cf. I John 5:4 f.

as St. Paul says: "By faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered Isaac. . . . By faith also of things to come, Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau. By faith Jacob dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph. . . . By faith he [Moses] left Egypt, not fearing the fierceness of the king: for he endured as seeing Him that is invisible. . . . By faith they [the Israelites] passed through the Red Sea. . . . The prophets . . . by faith conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions [like Daniel], quenched the violence of fire [like the three children in the furnace]. . . . They were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword . . . being in want, distressed, afflicted: of whom the world was not worthy." 12 This is what makes St. Paul say in the same epistle: "And therefore, . . . let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us: looking on Jesus, . . . who having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and now sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God. . . . For you have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." 18

The numerous martyrs who have died in Spain since July, 1936, gave our Lord this testimony of blood; they won the victory of heroic faith over the spirit of the world or the spirit of evil. Without going as far as the shedding of blood, this victory is won by the faith of all the saints: in the last century by that of the Curé of Ars, Don Bosco, St. Joseph Cottolengo, and nearer our day by that of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus, and of many very generous souls whose names we do not know, but whose oblation ascends toward God like the sweet odor of incense. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." 14 In this way souls are configured to Christ: first of all, to His childhood, then to His hidden life, in a measure to His apostolic life, and finally to His sorrowful life, before sharing in His glorious life in heaven.

12Heb. 11:17-38.
12 Heb. 12:1-4.
1₱s. 125:5.

CHAPTER XLIV

Heroic Hope and Abandonment

"Against hope ... in hope."
Rom. 4:18

HEROIC hope is the eminent degree of this virtue, which makes us tend toward God, the object of eternal beatitude, relying, in order to reach Him, on the help He promised us.[1] The formal motive of infused and theological hope is God Himself ever helpful, *Deus auxilians,* or helpful Omnipotence.

As long as the Christian has not reached perfection, his hope lacks firmness; it is more or less unstable, in the sense that the soul sometimes allows itself to slip into presumption when all is going well, and to fall subsequently into a certain discouragement when some undertaking does not succeed. Above these fluctuations, heroic hope is characterized by invincible firmness and trusting abandonment, sustained by unwavering fidelity to duty. The heroic confidence of the saints is also shown by its effects: it restores the courage of others and arouses hunger and thirst after the justice of God.

The Invincible Firmness of Perfect Hope

The Council of Trent tells us: "We should all have a most firm hope in the help of God; for if we do not resist His grace, as He has begun the work of salvation in us, He will finish it, working in us both to will and to accomplish, as St. Paul says (Phil. 2:13)."[2]

The invincible firmness of hope appears, we have seen, in the passive purification of the spirit when, to make us hope purely in Him, the Lord permits every human help to disappear. Then occur rebuffs, at times calumnies, which give rise to a certain mistrust in

[1] *Cf.* St. Thomas, IIa IIae, q. 17, a. 1, 2, 4, 5.
[2] Council of Trent, Scss. VI, chap. 13; Denzinger, no. 806.

those who until then had been helpful. In addition, the tried soul has a clearer view of its own wretchedness; it is likewise at times depressed by illness, and must overcome strong temptations to discouragement or even to despair, proceeding from the enemy of all good. The soul must then hope supernaturally and heroically against all human hope, as St. Paul says of Abraham, who, though nearly a hundred years old, did not despair of becoming the father of a great number of nations, according to the promise which had been given to him: "So shall thy seed be." [3]

If this trial is courageously endured, hope grows stronger and stronger during it and is increased tenfold. However, it does not give us absolute certitude that individually we shall be saved, since that would require a special revelation;[4] but we hope increasingly for salvation with a certitude of tendency. Just as under the direction of Providence, the animal's instinct tends infallibly toward its end, the swallow toward the country to which it should return, so under the direction of faith in the divine promises we tend infallibly toward eternal life.[5]

This firmness in tending toward eternal life should be invincible because of the formal motive on which it rests: God who always aids us, according to His promises. In spite of rebuffs, contradictions, the sight of our wretchedness and our sins, we should always hope in God, who has promised His help to those who ask Him for it with humility, trust, and perseverance. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. . . . And which of you, if he ask his father bread, will he give him a stone? Or a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? . . . If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask Him!"[6] And if we must ask conditionally for temporal goods, in the measure in which they are useful to our salvation, we should ask unconditionally, humbly to be sure, but

[3] Rom. 4:18.

[4] Cf. Council of Trent, *ibidem.*

[5] St. Thomas, IIa IIae, q. 18, a.4: "Certainty is found essentially in the cognitive power; by participation, in whatever is moved infallibly to its end by the cognitive power. . . . Thus (under the direction of faith) hope tends to its end with certainty, as though sharing in the certainty of faith which is in the cognitive faculty."

[6] Luke 11:9-13.

with absolute trust, for the graces necessary to persevere. And as St. Luke relates in the text just quoted, we should thus ask not only for the graces necessary for our sanctification, but for the Holy Ghost Himself, the gift par excellence. He is sent anew when the soul passes from one degree of charity to another that is notably higher, as it must be, for the soul to pass through the trials which are ordered precisely to this progress. Hope thus purified becomes invincible, according to the words of St. Paul, which have sustained the martyrs: "If God be for us, who is against us?" [7] The Lord has more than once said to His saints: "You shall lack help only when I lack power." St. Teresa of the Child Jesus used to say: "Even if I were the greatest sinner on earth, I should not have less trust in God, for my hope does not rest upon my innocence, but on God's mercy and omnipotence."

St. Paul grasped all the sublimity of this formal motive of hope when he wrote: "And lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me. For which thing thrice I besought the Lord that it might depart from me. And He said to me: My grace is sufficient for thee; for power is made perfect in infirmity. Gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. For which cause I please myself in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ. For when I am weak, then am I powerful": [8] that is, I cease to trust in myself, that I may trust in God: "I can do all things in Him who strengthened! me." [9] It is expedient to say to oneself then, as a holy soul used to say: Of ourselves we are nothing, but through our Lord we are something, since He loves us and redeemed us by His blood.

The story is told that one day St. Philip Neri went through the cloisters of his monastery exclaiming in a loud voice: "I am in despair, I am in despair." His spiritual sons, astonished, said to him: "Is it possible, you, Father, who so many times have restored our trust?" Leaping joyfully, St. Philip replied in his characteristic way: "Yes, left to myself, I am hopeless; but by the grace of our Lord, I still have confidence." He had doubtless had a very strong temp-

[7] Rom. 8:31.
[8] Cf. II Cor. 12:7-10.
[9] Phil. 4:13.

tation to discouragement, which he overcame in this fashion. He thus experienced the truth that one must be crushed in order to grow, to be configured to Him of whom Isaias says: "He was wounded for our iniquities." [10] St. Paul of the Cross had the same experience over a long period of years when he had to suffer in order to unify the Order of Passionists which he had founded, an order that was to bear especially the marks of our Savior's passion.[11]

Trusting Abandonment and Unwavering Fidelity

Heroic hope manifests itself not only by its firmness, but by trusting abandonment to Providence and to the omnipotent goodness of God. Perfect abandonment differs from quietism because it is accompanied by hope and unwavering fidelity to duty, even in little things, from moment to moment, according to our Lord's words: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in that which is greater." [12] He will receive the divine help to undergo martyrdom if necessary. Unwavering fidelity to the will of God signified in the duty of the present moment prepares the soul to abandon itself with entire confidence to the as yet unrevealed divine will of good pleasure, on which depend its future and eternity. The more faithful the soul is to the divine light received, the more it can abandon itself wholly to Providence, to divine mercy and omnipotence. Thus are harmonized in the soul the activity of fidelity and the passivity of abandonment, above restless, fruitless agitation and slothful quiet. At those times when all may seem lost, the soul repeats with the Psalmist: "The Lord ruleth me; and I shall want nothing. . . . For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff, they have comforted me." [13]

In its greatest difficulties, the tried soul remembers the holy man Job, who, after losing all he possessed, exclaimed: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. As it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done. Blessed be the name of the Lord." [14] The tried soul should

10 Isa. 53:5.

11 Cf. Father Cajetan of the Holy Name of Mary, C.P., *Oraison et ascension mystique de saint Paul de la Croix* (Louvain, 1930), chap. 3: "Quarante-cinq années de désolations."

12 Luke 16:10.

13 Ps. 22:1, 4.

14 Job 1:21.

also repeat the words of the Book of Proverbs: "Have confidence in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not upon thy own prudence. In all thy ways think on Him, and He will direct thy steps." [18] The Psalmist likewise says: "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded." [18] When all seemed lost, St. Teresa used to say: "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou canst do all, and Thou lovest me." To give oneself up to His love and in advance to accept all from this love rests the soul and makes it victorious over temptations to murmur. This temptation is sometimes formulated as follows: "O Lord, why dost Thou not come to my help?" We should remember that nothing escapes Providence, that the Lord watches over us, that there is a precious grace in the cross which He sends us, and that "His commiserations have not failed." [17] St. John of the Cross used often to say: "O heavenly hope, which obtains as much as it hopes for!"

Heroic hope, moreover, rests more and more on the infinite merits of our Savior, on the value of the blood He shed for us. No matter what happens, even though the world should crumble, we should hope in the good Shepherd, who gave His life for His sheep, and in God the Father, who, after having given us His own Son, cannot refuse to come to the aid of those who have recourse to Him.[18]

In *The Dialogue* of St. Catherine of Siena, the Lord says: "This true and holy hope is more or less perfect, according to the degree of love which the soul has for Me, and it is in the same measure that it tastes My Providence." [10] This spiritual taste is greatly superior to sensible consolations. In fact, not only does the perfect soul believe in Providence, but more and more discovers its manifestations where it least expected them. It tastes Providence by the gift of wisdom which shows it all things in God, even painful and unforeseen events, making it foresee the higher good for which He permits them.

In the same chapter of *The Dialogue* we read: "Those who serve Me disinterestedly, with the sole hope of pleasing Me, taste My Providence more than those who expect a recompense for their service in the joy which they find in Me. . . . Perfect and imper-

« Prov. 3:5 f.
iePs. 30:2.
lT Lam. 3:22.
«Cf. Rom. 8:32.
« *The Dialogue,* chap. 119.

feet are the object of My attentions; I shall not fail any, provided they have not the presumption to hope in themselves." [20]

The more disinterested we are, the more we taste Providence, see it in the course of our life, abandon ourselves to it and to the direction of our two great Mediators, who do not cease to watch over us. With trust in our Lord grows that in Mary, universal Mediatrix. She, who at the foot of the cross made the greatest act of hope when all seemed lost, merited to be called Mary Help of Christians, Our Lady of Perpetual Help. We know that frequent recourse to her is a special sign of predestination.

The Heroic Confidence of the Saints Restores Hope in Their Companions

That the heroic confidence of the saints revives the hope of their companions is particularly evident in the lives of the founders of religious orders. When they had neither money nor human support, when vocations were lacking or slow in coming, when they met with scarcely anything but mistrust and contradiction, they placed their confidence in God and lifted up the hope of their first sons, who remained faithful.[21]

On more than one occasion miracles have rewarded their trust. When there was only a loaf of bread for the brethren of the convent of Bologna, St. Dominic gave the loaf to a poor man asking for alms. The saint put his trust in God, and angels came from heaven to bring the necessary bread to the religious.

Blessed Raymond of Capua relates that St. Catherine of Siena "was accustomed to say to us when some one of my brethren and I feared some peril: 'Why do you concern yourselves? Let divine Providence act. When your fears are greatest, it is always watching over you and will not cease to provide for your salvation.' " [22] Such is perfect, entirely trustful abandonment, united to sustained fidelity to daily duty.

The Lord Himself said to St. Catherine of Siena during very trying times: "My daughter, think of Me; if thou dost so, I shall

,0 *Ibid.*

21 Cf. *La Vie du B" Père J. Eymard,* founder of the Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament.

12 Blessed Raymond of Capua, Life of *St. Catherine,* Part I, chap. io.

unceasingly think of thee.”[38] This trust in God enabled the saint to restore the courage of her companions during the exceptional mission entrusted to her of bringing the pope from Avignon to Rome, a mission which she accomplished in the midst of the greatest difficulties. The Sovereign Pontiff's entourage did everything possible to discredit the saint; in spite of this almost incredible opposition, the daughter of the dyer of Siena, trusting implicitly in our Lord, succeeded perfectly in her task.

How many discouraged souls, like young Nicholas Tuldo who was condemned to death, she raised up!

When she offered herself for the reformation of the Church, the Lord gave her the following counsel for herself and her spiritual children: “You ought to offer to Me the vessel of many fatiguing actions, in whatever way I send them to you, choosing, after your own fashion, neither place, nor time, nor actions. Therefore the vessel should be full, that is, you should endure all those fatigues with affection of love and true patience, supporting the defects of your neighbor, with hatred and displeasure of sin. . . . So, endure manfully, even unto death, and this will be a sign to Me that you love Me; and you should not turn your faces away and look askance at the plough, through fear of any creature or of any tribulation; rather, in such tribulations should you rejoice. . . . After your sorrow I will give you most sustaining consolation, with much substance in the reformation of the holy Church.”[24]

The Lord sustains the hope of His saints by words like those He addressed to Joan of Arc in her prison: “Do not fail to esteem your martyrdom; as a result of it, you will finally come to the kingdom of paradise.” The saints place their trust more and more in helpful omnipotence, saying to themselves: “God is stronger than all”; and their immolation itself is a triumph which configures them to our Savior. With Him they thus win the victory over sin and the devil. To persevere in the struggle, they ask the Lord to give them the sincere desire to share in His sacred humiliations, and in this desire to find strength, peace, and occasionally joy that they may revive the courage of those about them.

In the same proportion as charity grows, the fear of suffering

[38] *Ibid.*

[24] *The Dialogue,* chap. 12. This dialogue was dictated about two years before the saint's death.

diminishes and that of sin increases without weakening trust. The more closely we are united to God by charity, the more we fear sin, which would separate us from Him, and the more we trust in Him who loves us and draws us to Himself.[25]

25 We have an example of heroic hope in St. Mary Magdalen Postel, foundress of the Sisters of Mercy (cf. *Vie* by Msgr. Arsène Legoux). In Normandy during the French Revolution, she sustained the courage of several priests whom she assisted, and she made her foundation amid almost unbelievable difficulties, after having been abandoned by her director, who saw in these difficulties a sign that the work was not willed by God. The humble girl, who had no resources except the toil of her hands, hoped against all hope. The work was founded and flourishes today, and the valiant foundress, now canonized, gives the impression of eminent sanctity.

CHAPTER XLV

Heroic Charity

WE shall explain the nature of heroic charity by recalling the definition of this virtue. Charity is the infused theological virtue which makes us love God for Himself and more than ourselves, because He is infinitely good in Himself, infinitely better than we are, and than all His gifts. It also makes us love our neighbor in God and for God, because God loves him and as God loves him. Charity is thus a friendship between the soul and God, a communion of our love with His and a communion of souls in the love of God. We must, therefore, consider heroic charity first toward God, and secondly toward our neighbor.

Heroic Charity toward God
Perfect Conformity to His Will and Love of the Cross

Heroic charity toward God manifests itself in the first place by an ardent desire to please Him. In fact, to love someone not for oneself but for himself, is to wish him well, to wish what is suitable for him and pleasing to him. To love God heroically is, in the midst of even the greatest difficulties, to wish that His holy will be accomplished and His reign profoundly established in souls.

This holy desire to please God is a form of affective charity, which is proved by effective charity, or by conformity to the divine will, in the practice of all the virtues. The soul thus reaches unswerving fidelity in little things and in great things, or what is most difficult.

Heroic love of God is shown, we have seen, in the passive purification of the spirit, when it is a question of loving God for Himself, without any consolation, in great and protracted aridity, in spite of temptations to disgust, acedia, and murmuring, when the

Lord seems to withdraw His gifts and leave the soul in anxiety. God is for this reason none the less infinitely good in Himself and deserves to be loved purely for Himself. If then, in spite of such prolonged dryness, the soul loves to be alone with God, especially before the Blessed Sacrament, and if it still continues to pray, if in spite of everything its life remains a perpetual prayer, this is a sign of heroic love of God.

As St. Francis de Sales [1] shows, heroic conformity to the divine will appears when the soul receives lovingly every agreeable or painful occurrence as coming either from the positive will of God, or from a divine permission directed toward a higher good. It then sees with ever greater clearness the truth of the words of Ecclesiasticus: "Good things and evil, fife and death, poverty and riches, are from God." [2] The soul here becomes deeply convinced that God makes use even of the malice of men, for example, of persecutors, as an occasion of merit for those who wish to live only for Him. Thus Job accepted adversity, and in the same way David bore the insults of Semei.[3]

In the greatest difficulties, the saints, while doing what is in their power, say: "It will be as God wishes."

To this sign is added a confirmation: namely, one who thus renounces his own will and adheres heroically to the will of God finds a holy joy in this adherence. In conforming his will more and more to God's will, he has all that he wishes. He experiences the truth of the Psalmist's words: "O Lord, Thou hast crowned us, as with a shield of Thy good will." [4] This is what the martyrs have particularly experienced.

In his explanation of the Canticle of Canticles, St. Bernard describes the ascending degrees of heroic charity as follows: "Divine love leads to an unceasing search for God, to continual labor for Him; it bears indefatigably all trials in union with Christ; it gives a true thirst for God; it makes us run rapidly toward Him; it gives us a holy boldness and an undaunted audacity; it attaches us inseparably to God; it burns and consumes us with a very sweet ardor for Him; finally, in heaven, it likens us completely to Him." [5]

[1] *Treatise on the Love of God,* Bk. VIII, chaps. 5 f.; Bk. IX, chaps. 3-6, 15 f.
[2] Ecclus. 11:14.
[3] Cf. II Kings 16:10.
[4] Ps. 5:13.
[5] *The Canticle of Canticles,* V, 8; VIII, 6.

These degrees of perfect charity are explained in a short work attributed to St. Thomas,® and also by St. John of the Cross in *The Dark Night,*[1] where he shows that the second last degree is the transforming union, the prelude of that of heaven. "The Apostles," he says, "experienced this sweetness of ardent love when the Holy Ghost descended visibly upon them." [8]

The greatest sign of heroic charity toward God, is love of the cross. Tlie patience and conformity to the divine will of which we have spoken, lead to this love.

In *The Dialogue* of St. Catherine of Siena, the Lord says: "It now remains to be told thee how it can be seen that souls have arrived at perfect love. This is seen by the same sign that was given to the holy disciples after they had received the Holy Spirit, when they came forth from the house, and fearlessly announced the doctrine of My Word, My only-begotten Son, not fearing pain, but rather glorying therein. They did not mind going before the tyrants of the world to announce to them the truth, for the glory and praise of My name." [8]

In the same *Dialogue* we read: "Such as these, - - - as if enamored of My honor, and famished for the food of souls, run to the table of the most holy cross." [10] "They slacken not their pace on account of the persecutions, injuries, or pleasures of the world. They pass by all these things, . . . their affection clothed in the affection of charity, and eating the food of souls with true and perfect patience, which patience is a sign that the soul is in perfect love, loving without any consideration of self." [11] "Such as these do not feel any separation from Me. - - - I remain continually both by grace and feeling in their souls." [12]

In other words, the eminent exercise of charity is accompanied in a proportionate degree by the act of the gift of wisdom, which enables us, says St. Thomas,[13] to know God present in us in a quasi-experimental manner. This is truly the mystical life, the summit of

• *Opus.,* 61.
[1] *The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chaps. 18-20.
• *Ibid.,* chap. 20.
• *The Dialogue,* chap. 74.
[10] *Ibid.,* chap. 78.
[11] *Ibid.,* chap. 76.
[18] *Ibid.,* chap. 78.
[l*] *Summa,* Ila Ilae, q.45, «.1.

the normal development of grace and the prelude of the life of heaven. This summit cannot exist without love of the cross, and love of the cross does not exist without the contemplation of the mystery of the redemption, of the mystery of Christ dying for love of us.

Consequently, in *The Dialogue,* the Lord, speaking to St. Catherine of Siena for herself and for her spiritual children, says: "It is right for thee, and My other servants who have learned My truth in this way, to sustain, even unto death, many tribulations and injuries and insults in word and deed, for the glory and praise of My name; thus wilt thou endure and suffer pains";[14] that is, with patience, gratitude, and love.

Such are the great signs of heroic love of God: perfect conformity to His will in trials and love of the cross. There is also another sign, perfect charity toward one's neighbor, which we shall now discuss.

Heroic Charity toward One's Neighbor: the Ardent Desire for His Salvation and Radiating Goodness toward All

Charity leads us to love our neighbor in God and for Him; that is, because God loves him and as God loves him. It makes us desire that our neighbor may belong entirely to God and glorify Him eternally.

Heroic love of neighbor already exists when one promptly dominates strong temptations to envy, discord, isolation, so different from solitude; likewise when one quickly surmounts temptations to presumption, which incline one, in the wake of certain insults, to wish to get along without the help of others—of friends, director, superiors.

Perfect charity appears when, in the midst of great difficulties, one loves one's neighbor, *mente, ore, et opere,* that is, judging him with benevolence, speaking well of him, helping him in his necessity, perfectly pardoning offenses, and making oneself all to all. This charity is still more obvious if by preference one seeks out, as St. Vincent de Paul did, friendless and fallen souls, poor, strayed, and gravely guilty creatures, in order to lift them up, rehabilitate them, and set them back on the road to heaven.

A chief characteristic of heroic love of neighbor is an ardent desire for the salvation of souls, a thirst for souls, which recalls

[14] *The Dialogue,* chap. 4.

Christ's words on the cross: "I thirst." St. John used to say: "My little children, let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth." [18]

Heroic love of neighbor led some saints to the point of wishing to sell themselves as slaves that they might deliver captives and thus rescue families from wretched poverty. This zeal inspired St. Paul to write: "I wished myself to be an anathema from Christ,[16] for my brethren, who are my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites." [17]

This zeal inspired the apostolic activity of great missionaries, of St. Francis Xavier, St. Louis Bertrand, Las Casas, St. Peter Claver. Nearer our own day, it is the inspiration of apostles, like St. John Bosco, who are completely engrossed in bringing back to God the misguided masses in our Christian countries who no longer know the Gospel.

Another sign of heroic love of neighbor is radiating goodness toward all amid the greatest difficulties, according to the evangelical beatitude: "Blessed are the peacemakers," that is, those who not only preserve peace in most difficult moments, but who give it to others and hearten the most troubled. This eminent sign appears in Mary, the Consoler of the Afflicted, and in all those who resemble her. Our Lord says: "Love one another as I have loved you." [18] "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples." [19]

Communicative goodness, love of neighbor carried even to daily and hidden sacrifice, is the indisputable mark of the presence of God in a soul. This goodness, which is as strong as it is gentle, sometimes leads one to correct others, but without bitterness, sharpness, or impatience. And that the correction may be effective, it points out the good, the salutary seed which should be developed in the one who deserves the reprimand. Then the person receiving the reproof feels that he is loved and understood; he takes courage. If the Blessed Virgin were to appear and tell us our defects, she would do so with such goodness that we would immediately accept her corrections and draw from them the strength to make progress.[20]

[16] Cf. I John 3:18.
[16] Not for eternity, but for a more or less protracted period.
[17] Rom. 9:3 f.
[18] John 15:1a.
[19] *Ibid., 13:35.*
[20] We find an example of this goodness united to deep humility in the life

Perfect charity toward one's neighbor springs from close union with God, and it leads one's neighbor to this same union, according to our Savior's words: "I pray . . . for them also who through their word shall believe in Me; that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee." [21] The more united the soul is to God, the more it draws others to Him, never to itself. In the soul united to God, shines forth the divine goodness, which radiates, attracts powerfully and sweetly, and ends by triumphing over all obstacles.[22]

An incident from the life of St. Catherine of Siena will serve to illustrate this teaching. One day Peter Ventura, a Sienese involved in the affairs of the government, was brought to Catherine with his heart full of implacable hatred. "Peter," Catherine said to him, "I take all your sins on myself, I shall do penance in your place. But grant me a favor; go to confession." "I have just been to confession recently," said the Sienese. "That is not true," replied the saint, "it is seven years since you went to confession," and, one by one, she enumerated all the sins of his life. Stupefied, Peter admitted his guilt, repented of his sins, and pardoned his enemies. By promising Peter Ventura that she would take his sins on herself and expiate them, the saint had truly offered herself as a victim, and the Lord required of His servant, or rather His spouse, expiation through suffering. She interpreted literally Christ's words: "Love one another, as I have loved you."

In the same heroic manner St. Catherine obtained the conversion of Andrea Mei, a Sienese invalid, who had grievously calumniated her. The saint with consummate devotion nursed this woman, who was being eaten by a cancer. The unfortunate creature had the sorry courage to impugn the virginal honor of her devoted nurse, and

of the foundress of the Cenacle, who at the age of thirty-three resigned as superior general, and for almost fifty years obeyed like a simple sister. She was so obedient that it was only at the end of her life that those about her understood all that the Lord had given her and how closely she was united to Him. He had hidden her, but the radiation of her goodness in humility ended by revealing her. It was she who, by her love for God and souls, bore the burden of the congregation of which she was truly the foundress. Cf. P. H. Perroy, S.J., *Une grande humble,* Paris, 1926.

[21] John 17:20f.

[22] One of the characteristics of heroic charity is to bear with great generosity the sufferings that come from those one loves. Thus saints who, like St. Catherine of Siena and St. Joan of Arc, had a great love for the Church, have also had to suffer particularly from the faults of churchmen. This suffering was in the nature of reparation.

these evil remarks spread abroad. Catherine, however, did not cease to tend her with the same zeal. Her patience and humility triumphed over Andrea Mei. One day the saint, as she approached the sick woman's bed, was surrounded by light, as if resplendent in glory; "Pardon!" cried the guilty woman. Catherine threw her arms around her neck, and their tears mingled. It was like the radiation of the divine goodness and the realization of our Savior's words: "The glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given to them; that they may be one, as We also are one." [23]

Two souls united in God by charity are like two candles whose flames unite and fuse.

Charity, which thus triumphs over wickedness, makes the saints share in the victory of Christ over sin and the devil. It is one of the glories of His mystical body; through it shine forth the grandeur of the life of the Church, its fruitfulness in every kind of good and of works of mercy. It is the confirmation of the divine origin of the Church.

[23] John 17:«.

CHAPTER XLVI

The Heroic Degree of the Christian Moral Virtues

SINCE we cannot discuss here the heroic degree of each of the moral virtues in particular, we shall draw the inspiration for our selection especially from Christ's words: "Take up My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart." [1] We shall consider first the heroic degree of humility and meekness. These virtues give the Christian tone we need to treat next of the heroic degree of fortitude, prudence, justice, and other virtues corresponding to the three evangelical counsels.

Heroic Humility and Meekness

Humility, which represses inordinate love of our own excellence, leads us to abase ourselves before the majesty of God and before what is of God in every creature.[2] This virtue is heroic when it reaches the higher degrees described by St. Anselm [3] and recalled by St. Thomas: "The third and fourth degrees regard the avowal of one's own deficiency: namely, that not merely one simply assert one's failing, but that one convince another of it. The other three degrees have to do with the appetite, which seeks, not outward excellence, but outward abasement, or bears it with equanimity, whether it consist of words or deeds. . . . We should especially be humble toward those who make us suffer, and this belongs to the fifth and sixth degrees; or the appetite may even go so far as lovingly to embrace external abasement," [4] in order to be configured

1 Matt. 11:29.
2 *Summa,* IIa IIae, q. 161, a. 1, 3.
3 *Lib. de similitudinibus,* chaps. 99-108.
4 Cf. IIa IIae, q. 161, a.6 ad jum.

to our Lord, who, for love of our salvation, willed the final humiliations of the Passion.

Heroic humility led St. Peter to wish to be crucified head down; it led St. Francis of Assisi and St. Benedict Joseph Labre to rejoice in the worst treatment and to find therein a holy joy.

Perfect humility is manifested outwardly by a great habitual modesty. We read in Ecclesiasticus: "A man is known by his look, and a wise man ... is known by his countenance. The attire of the body and the laughter of the teeth and the gait of the man, show what he is." [5] St. Paul says: "Let your modesty be known to all men." [6] It appears on a calm, humble countenance, little inclined to laughter, in a grave, simple, unaffected bearing, which shows that a man lives in the presence of God and does not interrupt his intimate conversation with Him. Thus the truly humble and modest man speaks of God by his conduct and even by his silence.[7]

Heroic humility is accompanied by meekness in a proportionate degree. By this virtue man attains to complete self-mastery, to perfect domination of anger, when he does not return evil for evil, but triumphs over it by goodness.[8] The higher degrees of meekness consist in not being disturbed under injury, in experiencing a holy joy at the thought of the higher good it procures for one, and lastly in having compassion on the person who inflicts an injury, in suffering from the evil which it may cause him. Thus Jesus wept over Jerusalem, following its ingratitude; He was more sad over the wretchedness of the ungrateful city than over the cruel death He was about to undergo. The heroic meekness of Jesus is manifested especially by His prayer for His executioners.

Heroic Fortitude and Magnanimity

In the perfect soul humility and meekness are accompanied by virtues contrary in appearance, but in reality complementary: fortitude and magnanimity. They are like the two opposite sides of a pointed arch, supporting each other.

Fortitude is the moral virtue which strengthens the soul in the pursuit of the difficult good so that it does not allow itself to be

[5] Ecclus. 19:26!.
[6] Phil. 4:5.
[7] Cf. Ha Ilae, q. 160, a. 1, a.
[8] *Ibid.,* q. ij7, a. 1, 2, 4.

shaken by the greatest obstacles. It should dominate the fear of danger, fatigue, criticism, all that would paralyze our efforts toward the good. It prevents man from capitulating in a cowardly manner when be should fight; it also moderates audacity and untimely exaltation which would drive him to temerity.

Fortitude has two principal acts: to undertake courageously and to endure difficult things. The Christian should endure them for the love of God; it is more difficult to endure for a long time than, in a moment of enthusiasm, to undertake courageously something difficult.[9]

Fortitude is accompanied by patience to endure the sorrows of life without being disturbed and without murmuring, by longanimity which endures trials for a long time, and by constancy in good, which is opposed to obduracy in evil.

To the virtue of fortitude is also linked that of magnanimity, which leads to the lofty practice of all the virtues,[10] avoiding pusillanimity and effeminacy, but without falling into presumption, vainglory, or ambition.

The gift of fortitude adds a superior perfection to the virtue of fortitude. It disposes us to receive the special inspirations of the Holy Ghost, which are given to sustain our courage in the presence of danger and to drive out worry over not being able to accomplish a great duty or to endure trials. This gift makes us preserve, in spite of everything, "hunger and thirst after the justice of God." [11]

The heroic degree of the virtue of fortitude appears especially in martyrdom, undergone to give testimony to a truth of faith or to the grandeur of a Christian virtue. Outside of martyrdom, the virtue of fortitude, the gift of fortitude, patience, and magnanimity intervene each time that something heroic is to be accomplished or a great trial to be borne.

Christian fortitude differs from stoic fortitude inasmuch as it is

[9] *Summa,* IIa IIae, q. 123, a.6: "The principal act of fortitude is endurance, that is, to stand immovable in the midst of dangers rather than to attack them."

[10] *Ibid.,* q. 129, a. 4 ad jum: "Every virtue derives from its species a certain luster or adornment which is proper to each virtue; but further adornment results from the very greatness of a virtuous deed, through magnanimity which makes all virtues greater."

[11] *Ibid.,* q. 139.

accompanied by humility, meekness, and great simplicity. Simplicity is heroic when it has such love of the truth that it excludes absolutely all duplicity, every slightest lie, all simulation, every equivocation. It does not, however, lead a man to tell his every thought and feeling, and it knows very well how to keep a secret.

Heroic Prudence

People speak less of the heroic degree of prudence than of that of fortitude; nevertheless, in most difficult moments, this virtue also assumes a heroic character. Prudence it is that directs our actions toward the last end of life, by determining the golden mean of the moral virtues between deviations through excess and deficiency.[12] It makes us avoid rash haste, inconsideration, indecision, and inconstancy in the pursuit of the good. It has, therefore, for its object practical truth or the truth to be placed in our actions. For this reason our Lord said to His disciples: "Be ye therefore wise as serpents and simple as doves." [18] There is certainly a real difficulty in always perfectly harmonizing these two virtues. They are indispensable to the Christian, with a characteristic unknown to the philosophers: the Christian, in fact, not only should be the perfect upright man who develops his personality in a human manner; he ought always to act as a child of God, in perfect dependence on Him. He should even increasingly recognize this dependence; the child, on the other hand, should, as it grows up, be self-sufficient and not depend on the help of its earthly father.

In its higher degree Christian prudence recognizes with clarity and penetration the true good which the child of God should effect, and it firmly directs the other virtues to make him accomplish this good in a holy manner.

This virtue is, therefore, absolutely necessary to those who tend to perfection, or to intimate union with God. They should aspire to have all the virtues in a lofty degree, which presupposes prudence in a proportionate degree, at least in what concerns personal sanctification. Evidently this virtue is especially necessary for those whose duty it is to advise and direct others.

[12] Cf. IIa IIae, q.47, a.7.

[18] Matt. 10:16.

When we have excessive confidence in our own prudence, for our purification God permits us to fail in tact and refinement, with the result that we suffer more or less visible rebuffs. He also permits at times a certain lack of memory, or failures in attention, which have more or less regrettable results and humiliate us.

After this purification, prudence may become heroic; it is then manifestly accompanied by the gift of counsel in an eminent degree. Through this gift we receive the inspirations which, particularly in difficult cases, give us a supernatural intuition of what it is advisable to do. We see this strikingly in the counsels which St. Catherine of Siena gave to the pope to bring him back from Avignon to Rome, and in her letters to princes in regard to political matters concerning religion.

Without reaching so high a degree, perfect prudence, united to the gift of counsel, makes us see what must be said and done in difficult moments: for example, when we are asked an indiscreet question and must reply at once without violating the truth or revealing a secret. If the soul is as a rule docile to the Holy Ghost, He will then give it a special inspiration enabling it to find the right answer. There are many such examples in times of persecution, in particular when priests, who exercise their ministry in secret, have to reply to extremely insidious and exacting questions. In such cases, heroic prudence is manifested.

The same is true when the Lord causes certain servants of His to undertake things that may seem imprudent to many. St. Alexius, on the evening of his marriage, received the inspiration to leave his wife and spend his life in solitude and prayer as a pilgrim to the greatest sanctuaries. He did so heroically, and at last returned to Rome, without making himself known in the home of his patrician father where his pious wife was living. He spent several years there as a poor man, sleeping under a staircase; only after his death did his wife learn his secret. This heroic life had not destroyed conjugal love in them, but had completely spiritualized and transformed it. In this exceptional situation, St. Alexius, living incognito in his father's house, often mistreated by the servants, had to practice heroic prudence, united to the gift of counsel. The same is true of St. Francis of Assisi in his love of poverty, and likewise of those who, by a divine inspiration, undertake most difficult works, such as the complete rehabilitation of poor, fallen, criminal girls, finally mak-

ing them religious consecrated to God.[14] These servants of God are thus at times led into most difficult situations, in which to act and not to act may seem to many equally imprudent. Then one must humbly beg the Lord for light, the inspirations of the gift of counsel, and must remain pliable and docile in the hands of God. Perfect prudence is, therefore, inseparable from continual prayer to obtain divine light. It also inclines man to listen to the good advice of those who can enlighten him. It represents perfect maturity of spirit.

In regard to the "extraordinary supernatural," true prudence is circumspect. It does not reject it a priori; it verifies the truth of the facts and pronounces on the matter only when obliged to do so, after often asking God for light. Superior prudence manifests itself also in the examination of certain exceptional vocations.

The heroic degree of this virtue appears, therefore, especially in acts which, in the eyes of human wisdom, are imprudent, but which, in reality, show by their results that they are those of a higher prudence. Thus our Savior sent His twelve apostles to work without any human means for the conversion of the world. So, too, St. Dominic sent his first sons without resources into different parts of Europe where they founded centers of apostolic life which still subsist. This was an act of lofty prudence, evidently enlightened by the gift of counsel.

Heroic Justice

The justice in question here is not justice in the broad sense of the term, which designates the totality of the virtues, as when it is said of St. Joseph that he was a just man. The justice we are speaking of is the special virtue inclining our will always to render every man his due. Thus commutative justice establishes, according to just right, order between individuals by regulating exchanges. Distributive justice establishes order in society by distributing congruously to individuals goods of general utility, advantages, and duties. Legal or social justice establishes just laws in view of the common good and sees to their observance. Lastly, equity *(epicheia)* observes the spirit of laws even more than the letter, especially in exceptional

[14] Such is the work of the *Réhabilitées* founded by the Dominican, Father Latastc, who died in die odor of sanctity.

cases where the rigorous application of the letter, of legality, would be too rigid and inhuman.

To form an idea of perfect justice, either acquired or infused, we must bear in mind that this virtue forbids not only theft and fraud, but also lying or any voluntary word opposed to the truth, hypocrisy, simulation, the violation of a secret, insult to the honor or reputation of our neighbor by calumny, slander, or action. It also forbids rash judgment, derision, and raillery which unduly disparage our neighbor.

Our justice often has some alloy, when it is practiced at least partially from interested motives: for example, when a person pays a portion of his debts in order to avoid the costs of a lawsuit, or when he avoids lying partly because of the annoying consequences that might result from the lie. Justice, therefore, needs to be purified from all inferior alloy just as the other virtues do.

Perfect justice is necessary for those who aspire to close union with God, because they should become irreproachable in their dealings with others and practice toward them all the duties of justice and charity.

We read in Ecclesiasticus: "Strive for justice for thy soul, and even unto death fight for justice, and God will overthrow thy enemies for thee. Be not hasty in thy tongue: and slack and remiss in thy works. Be not as a lion in thy house, terrifying them of thy household, and oppressing them that are under thee. Let not thy hand be stretched out to receive, and shut when thou shouldst give." [16]

The perfect man who attains to close union with God should exercise heroic justice in all its forms, equity included. He should perfectly observe all divine and human laws, ecclesiastical and civil. If he must make a distribution of goods or offices, he should do so in proportion to the merits of each one, rising above excessively individual considerations of relationship or friendship. He should avoid all, even the slightest, injustice or injury to anyone.

Heroic justice is especially manifest when it is very difficult to harmonize it with certain deeply rooted affections: for example, when the father of a family, who is at the same time a magistrate, must decide against his grievously guilty son, or again when a su-

[16] Eccl. 4:33–36.

perior must send a very dear spiritual son to a distant and perilous post.

The Heroic Degree of the Religious Virtues

The virtue of religion appears in a heroic degree when a person practices his duties in spite of sharp opposition from his family or others. It appears also in the exact observance of the vow of the most perfect, or again in the foundation of a religious family in the midst of the great difficulties which generally accompany such a work.

Heroic poverty renounces everything, and is content with what is strictly necessary in order to resemble our Lord, who had not whereon to lay His head. He who desires nothing lacks nothing; thereby, like St. Francis of Assisi, he is spiritually rich and blessed.

Heroic chastity is manifest especially in perpetual virginity, when, in the flesh, one lives an entirely spiritual life and ends by forgetting every disorder of the senses by dint of victory.

Lastly, heroic obedience is shown by perfect abnegation of self-will, when a person does nothing, so to speak, without consulting his superiors, when he obeys all superiors whoever they may be, even though they may be only moderately kind or even ill-willed. At times obedience to very difficult orders is required, as was the case with Abraham who was asked to sacrifice his son. At such a time great faith is needed to see God Himself in the superior, who is His intermediary and who speaks in His name. It is a moment of dark night which, if well traversed, leads to a great light, for the Lord richly rewards with His graces of light, strength, and love, those who thus obey.[1] Evidently the heroic degree of the moral virtues places them more and more in the service of charity and prepares the soul for a very close union with God, which we shall discuss in the following chapter.

[1] The history of the Church recalls the memory of some religious who had great zeal, the stuff of sanctity, terrible trials, but who seemed to have lacked heroic obedience to superiors whose personal lives left much to be desired. Whatever be the merits of these servants of God, their beatification will never be considered.

CHAPTER XLVII

The Love of Jesus Crucified and of Mary in the Unitive Way

"In the world you shall have
distress; but have confidence,
I have overcome the world."
John 16:33

THE quietists held that the sacred humanity of our Savior was a means useful only at the beginning of the spiritual life.[1] St. Teresa, on the contrary, insists particularly that we should not of our own initiative leave off in prayer the consideration of our Savior's humanity, for it is the way which leads souls to His divinity.[2] In discussing the state of souls that are in the sixth mansion, the saint writes:

You may fancy that one who has enjoyed such high favors need not meditate on the mysteries of the most sacred Humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, but will be wholly absorbed in love. . . . Having been warned by experience in this respect, I have decided to speak again about it here. . . . Be most cautious on the subject; attend to what I venture to say about it and do not believe anyone who tells you the contrary. . . . How much less should we wilfully endeavor to abstain from thinking of our only good and remedy, the most sacred Humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ? . . . Our Lord Himself tells us that He is "the Way"; He also says that He is "the Light"; that no man cometh to the Father but by Him; and that "He that seeth Me, seeth the Father also." . . . True, those whom our Lord admits into the seventh mansion rarely or never need thus to help their fervor, for the reason I will tell you of,

1 Cf. Denzinger, *Enchiridion,* no. 1255.

2 *The Interior Castle,* second mansion, chap. 1; sixth mansion, chap. 7. *Life,* chap. 22.

if I recollect it when I come to write of this room where, in a wonderful manner, souls are constantly in the company of Christ our Lord both in His Humanity and His Divinity. . . . Life is long and full of crosses and we have need to look on Christ our pattern, to see how He bore His trials, and even to take example by His Apostles and saints if we would bear our own trials perfectly. Our good Jesus .and His most blessed Mother are too good company to be left. . . . I assure you, daughters, that I consider this a most dangerous idea whereby the devil might end by robbing us of our devotion to the most Blessed Sacrament?

St. Catherine of Siena, who drank several times from the sacred wound in the heart of Jesus, teaches the same doctrine in her *Dialogue.*[4] She speaks repeatedly of the value of our Savior's blood.

Christ's Victory and Its Radiation

All the saints have repeated St. Paul's words: "For to me, to live is Christ: and to die is gain. . . . Having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ." [5] As the profession of arms, says St. Thomas,[6] is the life of the soldier, as study is that of the scholar, so Christ was their life, the continual object of their love and the source of their energy. St. Paul likewise delighted in saying to the Corinthians: "For both the Jews require signs, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumblingblock, and unto the Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." [7] "For I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." [8] The great Apostle repeats this thought to the Ephesians with incomparable splendor: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation, in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your heart enlightened, that you may know what the hope is of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. And what is the exceeding greatness

[4] *The Interior Castle,* sixth mansion, chap. 7.

[5] *The Dialogue,* chaps. 21, 26, 59, 75, 76. Christ is compared to a bridge which links earth to heaven. This bridge has three steps to which correspond three states of the soul: the feet, the heart, the mouth.

[5] Phil. 1:21, 23.

[6] *In Ep. ad Philipp.,* 1:21.

[7] Cf. I Cor. 1:22-24.

[8] *Ibid.,* 2:2.

of His power toward us, who believe according to the operation of the might of His power, which He wrought in Christ, raising Him up from the dead." [9] "That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts; that, being rooted and founded in charity, you may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth: to know also the charity of Christ, which surpassed! all knowledge, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God." [10]

All the saints have lived until the end of their lives by the contemplation of the Passion, particularly those who were more configured to Jesus crucified, like St. Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic, and more recently St. Paul of the Cross, and St. Benedict Joseph Labre.

In the unitive way are manifested increasingly the immense spiritual riches of our Savior's holy soul, of His intellect, His will, His sensibility. More and more there appears His innate, substantial, uncreated sanctity, constituted by the very person of the Word who possesses intimately and forever His soul and body which suffered for us. One sees with increasing clearness the value of the plenitude of grace, light, and charity that sprang from the Word in the holy soul of Jesus. This plenitude was the source of the loftiest peace, of perfect beatitude even here on earth, and, at the same time, the source of the intensity of the sufferings of Christ, Priest and Victim, since these sufferings at the sight of men's sins, which He had taken on Himself, had the same depth as His love for His offended Father and for our souls in need of redemption.[11]

In the unitive way the soul becomes increasingly conscious of the great victory won by Christ during His passion and on the cross: the victory over sin and the devil, manifested three days later by that over death.[12]

The value of this victory over sin derived, as the soul comprehends more and more, from the act of theandric love, which drew from the divine person of the Word an intrinsically infinite worth to satisfy for our sins and to merit eternal life for us. This act of love of our Savior's holy soul "gave more to God than was required

[9] Eph. 1:17-20.

[10] Eph. 3:17-19.

[11] We developed this point at length in *The Love of God and the Cross of Jesus,* 1,174-223.

[12] Cf. Dom A. Vonier's beautiful book, *The Victory of Christ* (Burns, Oates and Washboume, 1934).

to compensate for the offense of the whole human race." [18] It proceeded from the very person of the Son who is equal to the Father, and was worth more than all the merits of men and angels in their totality. Superabundant in value, it was equal and even superior to the recompense merited, that is, to the eternal life of all the elect redeemed by the sacrifice of the cross.

Truly Christ could say: "Have confidence, I have overcome the world." [14] During periods of calamity and persecution, what a consolation to think that Christ crucified has already won the definitive victory, and that we have only to give ourselves to Him so that He may make us benefit by it!

There are still struggles on earth, but the victory is already won by Christ, the Head of the mystical body, of which we are the members. In the unitive way, devotion to our Savior's passion becomes increasingly devotion to the glorious Christ, by His cross the Conqueror of sin and the demon. The hymns of Holy Week sing of this victory:

Vexilla Regis prodeunt;
Fulget crucis mysterium,
Qua vita mortem pertulit,
Et morte vitam protulit.

Te, fons salutis, Trinitas,
Collaudet omnis spiritus:
Quibus crucis victoriam
Largiris, adde praemium.
Arnen.

Then the soul understands better and better what St. Thomas says, speaking of the love of God for Christ and for us: "God loves more the better things, for it has been shown that God's loving one thing more than another is nothing else than His willing for that thing greater good. God's will is the cause of goodness in things;

*· St. Thomas, Illa, q.48, a. 2.

14 John 16:33. Likewise we read in I John 5:4: "This is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith." And in Hebrews 11:1: "Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for"; our faith is victorious over the spirit of the world, because it makes us scorn those things that would separate us from God.

and for this reason some things are better than others, because God wills for them greater good. . . . God loves Christ not only more than He loves the whole human race, but more than He loves the entire created universe. He willed for Him the greater good in giving Him 'a Name that is above all names,' in so far as He was true God. Nor did anything of His excellence diminish when God delivered Him up to death for the salvation of the human race; rather did He become thereby a glorious conqueror [over sin, the devil, and death]. For, as Isaias (9:6) says: 'The government was placed upon His shoulder.' " [18]

The text just quoted throws light on why God permitted the sin of the first man and its results. St. Thomas says: "God allows evils to happen in order to bring a greater good therefrom; hence it is written (Rom. 5:20): 'Where sin abounded, grace did more abound.' Hence, too, in the blessing of the paschal candle, we say: 'O happy fault, that merited such and so great a Redeemer!' " [16] Christ's death on the cross, which is at the same time His victory, is the most glorious manifestation of the mercy and power of God. "For God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son," says St. John.[17] This truth appears more and more to the contemplative soul and daily shows the soul more clearly the infinite value of the Sacrifice of the Mass, which perpetuates in substance that of the cross and applies its fruits to us.

Devotion to Mary in the Unitfve Way

In the unitive way, there is a profound influence, secret touches of Mary, Mediatrix of all graces, given to lead us to ever greater intimacy with our Lord. The soul that follows this way thereby enters increasingly into the mystery of the communion of saints and shares in the loftiest sentiments of the Mother of God at the foot of the cross, after the death of our Lord, on Pentecost, and still later in her prayers for the diffusion of the Gospel by the apostles, by which she obtained for them the great graces of light, love, and fortitude which they needed to carry the name of Jesus to the extremities of the then known world. Mary thus exercised the lofti-

[18] *Summa,* la, q.20, a.4, c. and ad mm.
[16] *Ibid.,* Illa, q. 1, a. 3 ad 3 1m.
[17] John 3:16.

est apostolate through prayer and immolation, which rendered inexpressibly fruitful the apostolate by teaching and preaching. The summits of the life of the Church, the mystical body of Jesus, are today no less under the influence of Mary Mediatrix, whose action is more universal and more radiant since her assumption into heaven.[18]

That it may penetrate the mystery of Christ, that of His passion, the contemplative soul should beg Mary to introduce it more profoundly into this mystery, as the Franciscan Jacopone da Todi (1228-1306) does in the Stabat Mater. This hymn is only one of a number of liturgical prayers asking for this grace.

This sequence demonstrates in a singularly striking manner how much the supernatural contemplation of the mystery of Christ is in the normal way of sanctity. In precise, ardent, and splendid images, it expresses the wound in our Savior's heart and shows us how intimate and penetrating is Mary's influence to lead us to it. And not only does the Blessed Virgin lead us to this divine intimacy, but, in a sense, she establishes it in us as the admirable repetition of the word *Fac,* the expression of ardent prayer, makes clear:

Eia Mater, fons amoris,
Me sentire vim doloris
Fac ut tecum lugeam.

Fac ut ardeat cor meum,
In amando Christum Deum,
Ut sibi complaceam.

Fac ut portem Christi mortem,
Passionis fac consortem
Et plagas recolere.

Fac me plagis vulnerari,
Fac me cruce inebriari,
Et cruore Filii.

This hymn is the prayer of the soul desirous of knowing spiritually, in its turn, the wound of love and of being associated with these sorrowful mysteries through reparatory adoration, as St. John

[18] In the original, this paragraph appears as an addendum, referring to this chapter. Cf. also Note, p. 370.

and St. Mary Magdalen were in the company of Mary on Calvary, and as St. Peter also was when he shed abundant tears.

The soul would wish always to shed these tears of contrition and adoration for, in a work attributed to St. Augustine, we read "that the more one suffers from offense offered to God, the more one rejoices in experiencing this holy sorrow." [19] The Stabat Mater expresses these sentiments in the following beautiful strophe:

Fac me tecum pie flere,
Crucifixi condolere,
Donec ego vixero.
Juxta crucem tecum stare,
Et me tibi sociare
In planctu desidero.

We should not fail to profit by these fountains of life, but should slake our thirst at them. From the adorable wounds of our Savior gushes forth the life that we should drink abundantly. May the Lord, during the Sacrifice of the Mass and at Communion, lift us up to the fountain of His Sacred Heart! Such is the petition of a beautiful German prayer in a form accessible to all the faithful:

Ich danke Dir, Herr Jesu Christ,
Dass du fiir mich, gestorben hist;
Lass dein Blut und deine Pein
An mir dock nicht verloren sein.

"I thank Thee, Lord Jesus Christ, for having died for me. Let not Thy blood and Thy anguish be lost on me."

In a more intimate and ardent manner St. Nicholas of Flüe, called by the Swiss the Father of their country, expresses the same thought: "My Lord and my God, take from me everything that hinders me from going to Thee! My Lord and my God, give me everything that will lead me to Thee! My Lord and my God, take me from myself and give me completely to Thyself!"

Of a surety, this contemplation of our Savior's infinite merits is in the normal way of sanctity; without it there can be no true love of the cross, which is nothing else than an ardent love of

[19] *Liber de vera et falsa poenitentia,* chap. 13: *"Semper doleat poenitens, et de dolore gaudeat."* Cf. St. Thomas, Illa, suppl., q.4, a. a: "Whether it is expedient to grieve for sin continually."

Jesus crucified. It is the royal road to heaven, and in it there is already something like a beginning of eternal life, *quaedam inchoatio vitae aeternae.*[20]

A greatly tried soul wrote as follows: "Our Savior's divine words have often sustained me: 'In the world you shall have distress; but have confidence, I have overcome the world.' His final triumph, that triumph which casts so consoling a light on the things of earth, is an immense joy to me. When, worn out, I lift my eyes to our good Master, sighing: 'Lord, I need joy,' I see His triumph, His victory at the end of time, and this ray from on high illumines the darkest nights and restores peace to my soul in spite of all disasters. It is as if from the shore one watched the torrents passing by. Things *go so* badly on earth. The foundations of the universe tremble, but He is immutable, immutably good."

Following our Lord in this way, man does not walk in darkness, but receives in ever greater abundance the light of life.[21]

20 Cf. St. Thomas, la Ilae, q.69, a.2; Ila Ilae, q.24, a.3 ad 211m; *De veritate,* q. 14, a.2.

21 Father Mary John Joseph Lataste, O.P., founder of the Œuvre des Réhabilitées de Béthanie, without knowing the prayer of St. Nicholas of Fliie, which we have just quoted, composed the following very similar prayer: "O my Jesus, how I love Thee! Give Thyself to me and give me to Thyself! Identify me with Thyself; may my will be Thine! Incorporate me in Thee, that I may live only in Thee and for Thee! May I spend for Thee all that I have received from Thee, keeping nothing for myself! May I die to everything for Thee! Grant that I may win souls for Thee! Souls, O my Jesus, souls."

SECTION III

The Forms and Degrees of the Unitive Life

IT is not possible to get a right idea of the unitive life without considering its different forms and degrees. We shall, consequently, treat here of the perfect apostolic life, the fruit of contemplation, and of the life of reparation. This will prepare us to understand better what the great spiritual writers have said of arid mystical union, ecstatic union, and the transforming union. We shall thus see how to settle the question whether a soul can have the full perfection of divine love without the mystical union, either in aridity or enjoyment.

To discuss these subjects, so far beyond us, we recall what has been said of young and old professors: "Young professors teach more than they know, that is, many things they do not know. Middle-aged professors teach all that they know. Old professors teach what is useful to their hearers." It is imperative to follow the example of the last named when one approaches the subject we are going to treat of now. To deal with it in a satisfactory manner, one should have personal experience of this eminent union. We can only repeat briefly what seems to us most essential in the testimony of the saints. We are like a spectator who, still in the valley, gazes from below at the ascent of those who are climbing to the very summit of the mountain.

CHAPTER XLVIII

Perfect Apostolic Life and Contemplation

> "From the fullness of contemplation proceed teaching and preaching." St. Thomas, IIa IIae, q. 188, a. 6.

IT is inadvisable to treat of the intimate union of the purified soul with God without speaking of the fruits which result from this union in perfect apostolic life. This life differs from a purely contemplative life, that of the Carthusian, for example, and from the active life of orders devoted to hospital work, since it unites contemplation and apostolic action, which consists in the teaching of sacred doctrine, preaching, and the direction of souls.

This explains why, in the Church, orders dedicated to the apostolic life, like those of St. Dominic and St. Francis, the Carmelites, and others, unite monastic observances, such as abstinence, fasts, night rising, the profound study of philosophy and theology, integral liturgical prayer, that is, the Divine Office chanted in choir, and lastly the apostolate by oral or written teaching and preaching. If one of these elements happens to prevail to the detriment of the others, the harmony of this apostolic life is compromised. Emphasis is placed either on the letter of observances, or on a lifeless study, or on superficial preaching which cannot be fruitful. In this great diversity of functions, it is essential to preserve their balance, their unity, which constitutes the very spirit of this life; otherwise it becomes materialistic and superficial.

Blessed Henry Suso received a vision on this subject which showed

him that, in an order devoted to the apostolic life, those who are almost exclusively attached to external observances are not more advanced than those who give themselves to study without the spirit of prayer, without generous love for God and souls, because neither group tends to become like Christ, neither lives by Him or can give Him to others.[1] "Their eyes are not yet opened," says Blessed Henry Suso; they do not know the meaning of the interior life, nor do they understand the value of the cross, without which the apostle cannot work for the salvation of souls.

The Eminent Source of the Apostolate

The apostolic life should resemble as closely as possible that of our Lord and of the Apostles St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. John the Evangelist. The fathers of the Church, shepherds of their dioceses, lived this life, as also did great theologians, apostles like St. Bernard, St. Dominic, great missionaries like St. Francis Xavier. All were priests of deep thought and prayer, true contemplatives, who, to save souls, gave them their living contemplation of God and of Christ.

A striking example of preaching that "proceeds from the fullness of contemplation," to use St. Thomas' expression, is found in the sermons of St. Peter on Pentecost, when, enlightened and fortified by the Holy Ghost, he said to the Jews: "Jesus of Nazareth. . . . This same being delivered up, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you by the hands of wicked men have crucified and slain. Whom God hath raised up."[2] "But the Author of life you killed, whom God hath raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. . . . This [Jesus] is the stone which was rejected by you the builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other."[3]

The preaching that proceeds from the fullness of contemplation overflows in the epistles of St. Paul: for example, in the following excerpt from the letter to the Ephesians: "I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the

[1] *The Book of Eternal Wisdom,* Part III, chap. 5.
[2] Acts 2:23 f.
[3] Acts 3:15; 4:11 f.

riches of His glory, to be strengthened by His Spirit with might unto the inward man, that Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts; that, being rooted and founded in charity, you may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth; to know also the charity of Christ, which surpassed! all knowledge, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God." [4]

The eyes that gaze openly upon divine things are those employed in the loving and penetrating contemplation of revealed mysteries, a contemplation superior to the exterior practices of penance and also to simple study. It is the contemplation which, together with profound love of God and neighbor, should be the soul of the apostolate.

Like Jesus Christ and the Twelve, the apostle should be a contemplative who gives his contemplation to others to sanctify and save them. St. Thomas states the special end of the apostolic life in the phrase: *"Contemplari et contemplata aliis tradere"* [5]

How should the relations of contemplation and action in the apostolic life be understood? That the apostolic life may preserve its unity, contemplation and action cannot be on an equal footing in it. One should be subordinated to the other, otherwise they would harm each other, and finally a choice would have to be made between them.

How should this subordination be understood? Some unconsciously diminish the traditional teaching, saying that the apostolic life has apostolic action for its primary and principal end, but that it also tends toward a certain contemplation as a means requisite for action.

Did holy apostles and great missionaries like St. Francis Xavier consider the loving contemplation of the mysteries of faith a simple means subordinated to action? Did the holy Curé of Ars thus consider prayer, meditation, the celebration of Mass? Would not such an attitude diminish the importance of union with God, the source of every apostolate? By following this point of view which is seldom explicitly formulated, one would reach the point of saying that love of neighbor is superior to love of God; this would constitute a heresy that would overthrow the very order of charity.

[4] Eph. 3:14-19.
[5] Cf. IIa IIae, q. 188, a.6.

St. Thomas and his disciples state in a more lofty, traditional, and fruitful manner that the contemplation of divine things and the union with God which it implies cannot be conceived as a means subordinated to action, for they are superior to it. It is indisputable that there is nothing more sublime on earth than union with God through contemplation and love,® and, consequently, there is profound value in apostolic action only so far as it proceeds from this source, which, far from being a subordinated means, is an eminent cause.

Even more, it is apostolic action itself that is a means subordinated to the union with God to which the apostle wishes to lead souls, as he himself has been led thereto. Therefore we must say that the apostolic life tends principally to contemplation which fructifies in the apostolate. As St. Thomas well says: "Preaching of the divine word should proceeed from the fullness of contemplation." 7 This is the explanation given by his best commentators, among whom may be named the Carmelites of Salamanca 8 and the Dominican Passerini.9

St. Thomas adds that Christ was not content with the purely contemplative life, but chose that which presupposes the abundance of contemplation and comes down from it to share it with men by preaching.10

According to several Thomists, there is even between contemplation and action a relationship similar to that existing between the Incarnation and the redemption. The Incarnation, or the hypostatic union of the human nature of Christ with the uncreated person of the Word, is not ordered to our redemption as an inferior means to a higher end, but as an eminent cause to an inferior effect. St. Thomas says: "God loves Christ not only more than He loves the

• *Ibid.,* q. 182, a. i: "The contemplative life is simply more excellent than the active." *Ibid.,* a. 4: "With regard to its nature . . . the contemplative life precedes the active, inasmuch as it applies itself to things which precede and are better than others, wherefore it moves and directs the active life."

7 *Ibid.,* q. 188, a. 6.

8 *Cursus theologicus,* tr. XX, *De statu religioso,* disp. II, dub. Ill: "The proximate end of the mixed life is contemplation that it may overflow in action on behalf of one's neighbor."

9 *De hominum statibus,* in Ham Ilae, q. 188, a. 6: "A mixed religious order aims principally at contemplation that it may fructify exteriorly for the salvation of souls."

10 Cf. Illa, q.40, a. 1 ad turn; a. 2 ad jum.

whole human race, but more than He loves the entire created universe. . . . Nor did anything of His excellence diminish when God delivered Him up to death for the salvation of the human race; rather did He become thereby a glorious conqueror." [11] In this passage, St. Thomas shows that his doctrine emanates from the contemplation of the grandeur of the mystery of Christ.

From all eternity God willed the Incarnation, not as subordinated to the redemption, but as fructifying in the redemption. Likewise, in the apostolic life, He willed contemplation and union with God, not as subordinated to action, but as fructifying in the apostolate.

Why should the apostolate proceed from the contemplation of the mysteries of salvation? Is this a necessity? It is, that the preaching of the Gospel and the direction of souls may be luminous, living, simple, and penetrating, imbued with the unction which attracts hearts and the deep conviction which draws them on. St. Thomas says in substance: He who brings the word of God to others should instruct them, draw their hearts toward God, and move their wills to the fulfillment of the divine law.[12]*

This should be the case in order that preaching may convey not only the letter, but the spirit of the word of God, of supernatural mysteries, of the precepts, and of the counsels. It is not a question here of romantic lyricism, but of the breath of divine truth which comes from a great spirit of faith and from ardent love for God and souls.

To comprehend what the preaching of the Gospel should be, we must remember that the New Law is only secondarily a written law; it is primarily and principally a law infused into souls, "the grace itself of the Holy Ghost." [18] That we might be made to live by this grace, we had to be instructed by the exterior and the written word on the mysteries to be believed and the precepts to be observed.

The preaching of the Gospel should be spirit and life. And that the apostle may not become discouraged in the midst of all the obstacles he encounters, he must hunger and thirst after the justice of God; he must have the gift of fortitude to persevere to the end and to lead souls on with him. Hunger and thirst for the justice of

[11] Cf. la, q.io, a.4 ad mm.
[12] Cf. Ila Hae, 9.177, a. 1.
[12] Cf. la Ilae, q. 106, a. 1.

God grow in liturgical and in mental prayer. But it is chiefly the celebration of the holy Sacrifice of the Mass which, through the union with God found in it, is the summit from which the living preaching of the divine word should descend like a stream.

Normally a priest, to be "another Christ," should reach the supernatural contemplation of the sacrifice of the cross perpetuated in substance on the altar. This contemplation should be the very soul of the apostolate. Evidently it is not a means subordinated to the apostolate, but an eminent cause, similar to the always abundant springs from which great rivers flow. In a word, to bring others to God, a man must himself be closely united to Him.

The Condition of the Apostolate and Its Fruitfulness

The fruits of the apostolate should be the conversion of infidels and sinners, the advancement of the good: broadly speaking, the salvation of souls. We should bear in mind that to save souls our Lord was not content simply to preach the truth to them; He died on the cross for love of them. Similarly, apostles cannot save souls by preaching without suffering for them.

St. Paul points this out when he writes: "In all things we suffer tribulation, but are not distressed; we are straitened, but are not destitute; we suffer persecution, but are not forsaken; we are cast down, but we perish not; always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies." [14] Christ announced this persecution when He promised the hundredfold to those who follow Him.[15]

The Lord recalled this truth to St. Catherine of Siena, as we see in her *Dialogue:* "Now look at the ship of thy father Dominic, My beloved son. He ordered it most perfectly, wishing that his sons should apply themselves only to My honor and the salvation of souls, with the light of science, which light he laid as his principal foundation. . . . At what table does he feed his sons with the light of science? At the table of the Cross, which is the table of holy desire, when souls are eaten for My honor." [u]

[14] Cf. II Cor. 4:8-10.
[11] Mark 10:30.
[*] *The Dialogue,* chap. 139.

Among the spiritual writers of the Society of Jesus, Father Lallemant speaks in like terms in *La Doctrine spirituelle:* "As our Lord redeemed the world only by His cross . . . ; so too, evangelical laborers apply the grace of the redemption only by their crosses and the persecutions which they suffer. Therefore great returns should not be expected from their labors unless these are accompanied by obstacles, calumnies, insults, and sufferings.

"Some think they do wonders because they preach well prepared sermons, that are delivered with charm, that are in fashion, and welcomed everywhere. They are deceived; the means on which they rely are not those which God makes use of to do great things. Crosses are needed to procure the salvation of the world. Those whom God employs to save souls, He leads by the way of crosses, as we see in the lives of apostles such as St. Francis Xavier, St. Ignatius, St. Vincent Ferrer, St. Dominic. . . . Jesus has chosen our crosses for us, and offers them to us as the material of the crowns He is preparing for us, and as a test of our virtue and fidelity in His service." [17]

St. Grignion de Montfort sets forth the same doctrine in his *Lettre aux amis de la croix* and in *UAmour de la divine sagesse* (Part I, chap. 6).

The amazing fruitfulness of the apostolate of the saints is apparent especially in the missions. In Asia and the Indian Archipelago, St. Francis Xavier converted thousands of pagans; the same was true of St. Peter Claver. St. Louis Bertrand, the St. Francis Xavier of New Granada, in the midst of incessant perils, brought more than 150,000 souls to the Christian faith. In different regions, how many missionaries were cruelly martyred, their blood becoming the seed of Christians! The life of the Church, like that of her divine Founder, is a life which has passed through death and which thus always preserves its youth and an inexhaustible fecundity.

Consequently the fruitful apostolate should proceed from close union with God and the contemplation of divine things; "from the fullness of contemplation," St. Thomas even says, though his language is always so reserved.

Our study of this question has given us an additional confirmation of the doctrine which teaches that contemplation, proceeding

[17] *La Doctrine spirituelle,* Second principle, sect. I, chap. 3, a.4: Of the love of crosses.

from living faith enlightened by the gifts, is in the normal way of sanctity, especially for the priest who must direct, enlighten, and lead souls to perfection.[18]

[11] Cf. Cardinal Mercier, *La Vie intérieure, appel aux âmes sacerdotales,* 1919, pp. 237 ff.: The faithful soul experiences the divine intimacy. Why there are relatively few souls that taste this union. Our responsibility in this regard. What is the apostolic vocation? Pp. 244-96: The devotion of the shepherd to his flock: universal charity, magnanimous charity, effective charity. Pp. 296-315: Worship and preaching of the Christian mystery, the substance of the Gospel. Is this mystery the preferred object of our prayers? The decline of religious beliefs and the insufficiency of dogmatic teaching. Let your life be a life of prayer. *Ibid.,* pp. 443-70.

See also J. Maritain, "Action et contemplation," *Revue Thomiste,* May-June, 1937, pp. 18-51.

CHAPTER XLIX

The Life of Reparation

TO complete what we have said about union with God in the perfect, we should deal at least briefly with the life of reparation, which, through prayer and suffering, is an apostolate, willed by God to render abundantly fruitful the doctrinal apostolate by preaching.

Our Lord saved the world even more by His heroic love on the cross than by His sermons. His words gave us light, pointed out to us the way to follow; His death on the cross obtained for us the grace to follow this way.

Mary, who merited the title of Coredemptrix and that of universal Mediatrix, is the model of reparatory souls through her sufferings at the foot of the cross. By them she merited congruously for us, or by a merit of propriety based on charity, all that the Word made flesh merited for us in strict justice. His Holiness Pius X [1] approved this common teaching of theologians, and Pope Benedict XV ratified her title of Coredemptrix, saying that "Mary, in union with Christ, redeemed the human race." [2] Thus Mary became the spiritual mother of all men.

More recently, in the encyclical *Miserentissimus Redemptor,* His Holiness Pius XI reminded the faithful of the necessity of reparation, exhorting them to unite the oblation of all their vexations and sufferings to the oblation ever living in the heart of our Lord, the principal Priest of the Sacrifice of the Mass.

In the Mass, the immolation of Jesus is no longer bloody and painful as on the cross, but the painful immolation ought to continue in the mystical body of the Savior and will continue until the end of the world. While progressively incorporating into Himself

[1] Encyclical *Ad diem ilium,* February i, 1904.
[2] *Acta Apost. Sed.,* X, 182, Letter of March 22, 1918.

the faithful whom He vivifies, Jesus, in fact, reproduces in them something of His life as a child, of His hidden, His public, and His sorrowful life, before making them share in His glorious life in heaven. By so doing He enables them to work, to cooperate with Him, through Him, and in Him, for the salvation of souls by the same means as He used. In this sense St. Paul wrote: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for His body, which is the Church." § Nothing is wanting in the sufferings of Christ in themselves. They have an infinite and superabundant value by reason of the personality of the Word of God made man; but something is lacking in their radiation in us.

The Life of Reparation in the Priest

The priest in particular should be "another Christ." Jesus is Priest and Victim. The priest cannot wish to participate in the priesthood of Christ without sharing in some way in His state as victim, in the measure willed for him by Providence. When the priest ascends the altar, he bears on the front and back of his chasuble a cross which recalls our Savior's.

Great bishops who, in times of persecution, gave their lives for their flocks thus understood it. A similar idea of the priesthood distinguishes priest saints, like St. Bernard, St. Dominic, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Philip Neri, and nearer our own day the Curé of Ars, who, while offering the body and precious blood of our Lord, offered all his sufferings for the faithful who came to him.

Likewise too, the friend of the Curé of Ars, Venerable Father Chevrier of Lyons, used to say in substance to the priests whom he trained: "The priest should be another Christ. Thinking of the crib, he should be humble and poor; the more he is so, the more he glorifies God and is useful to his neighbor. The priest should be a man who is stripped. Recalling Calvary, he should think of immolating himself in order to give life. The priest should be a crucified man. Meditating on the tabernacle, he should remember that he ought to give himself incessantly to others; he should become like good bread for souls. The priest should be a man who is consumed." *

§ Col. 1:24.

* Cf. Anthony Lestra, *Le Père Chevrier* (Paris, 1934), p. 165.

Father Charles de Foucauld, who offered his life in order to seal with his blood his apostolate among the Moslems, wrote in a notebook, which he always carried on his person: "Live as if you were to die a martyr today. The more everything is lacking to us on earth, the more we find the best thing that earth can give us: the cross." 5

This attitude of soul is patent in the lives of many founders of religious orders, who, following the example of our Lord, had to complete their work by perfect self-immolation. This is especially manifest, and most strikingly so, in the life of St. Paul of the Cross, who founded the Passionists in the eighteenth century.® His life is one of the greatest examples of the life of reparation in a founder. By forty-five years of sufferings which were like a continual prayer in the Garden of Olives, he confirmed his work. St. Paul died in 1775 at the age of eighty-one; the last months of his life were like an anticipated heaven.

The profound pages in the book just mentioned, in our opinion throw light on the lives of several other saints, in particular on the last years of St. Alphonsus Liguori when he was so severely tried. A superficial reading of the interior sufferings described in his *Life,* written by Father Berthe, might lead one to believe that they were those of the passive purification of the senses united to those of the spirit. In reality, the soul of this great saint, then eighty years of age, was already purified, and these great trials at the end were chiefly reparatory for the sanctification of sinners. It is the great apostolate

6 As another example of the life of reparation, we cite that of the holy Abbé Girard, subdeacon of Coutances, who died in 1921 after twenty-two years of suffering. His life has been written under the title: *Vingt-deux ans de martyre,* by Myriam de G. (Lyons), who herself has been nailed to a bed of pain for twenty-five years. After receiving the subdiaconate, die holy cleric was stricken with tuberculosis of the bones of the knees. In spite of several operations and his pilgrimages to Lourdes, he did not recover, but he obtained a greater grace, that of daily offering his suffering to render fruitful the apostolate of the priests of his generation. After twenty-two years of martyrdom, his body, eaten away by tuberculosis, was one great wound. As he lay dying, he accepted the continuation of his sufferings for as many years more if it were necessary. His painful immolation, united to that of the Mass, had made a saint of him; it must have obtained the conversion of a great number of souls.

" Father Cajctan of the Holy Name of Mary, C.P., *Oraison et ascension mystique de saint Paul de la Croix* (Louvain, 1930), pp. 86-88, 115–77. $ee also the appendix to this chapter.

through suffering that makes the saints share in the sorrowful life of our Lord and that allows them to seal their work as He sealed His on the cross.

The Life of Reparation in All Those Who Have a Heavy Cross to Carry

If the priest ought to be another Christ, the simple Christian should also "take up his cross daily" [7] and offer his sufferings in union with the sacrifice of Jesus perpetuated on the altar. He ought to offer them for himself and for the souls for whose salvation he should work.

St. Benedict Joseph Labre was not a priest. He did not share, in the real sense of the word, in the priesthood of Christ, but he shared largely in His state as a victim. As much must be said of many spouses of Christ, who, following Mary's example, share in His sufferings and find therein a profound spiritual motherhood, which is like a reflection of the spiritual maternity of the Blessed Virgin in relation to souls redeemed by the blood of her Son.

Mary did not receive the priestly character; she could not consecrate the Holy Eucharist, but as Father Olier says, "she received the plenitude of the spirit of the priesthood," which is the spirit of Christ the Redeemer. She penetrated the mystery of our altars far more than did the Apostle St. John, when he celebrated Mass in her presence and gave her Holy Communion. In the early Church, Alary, by her interior oblation united to that of the Mass, rendered the apostolate of the Twelve fruitful. By her interior suffering at the sight of the nascent heresies that denied the divinity of her Son, she was the spiritual mother of souls to a degree unimaginable without profound experience of this hidden apostolate. She thus continued the sacrifice of her Son.

A servant of God who lived by this truth for a long time said to us: "The mystical body of Christ can no more live without suffering than our eyes without the light of the sun. On earth, the nearer a soul is to God, that is, the more it loves, the more it is dedicated to suffering. For souls that have received everything from the Church, is it not a noble vocation to live and immolate themselves

[7] Luke 9:23: "And He said to all: If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

for their Mother?" [8] The same valiant religious said also: "Patience is necessary, but I shall win her. Our Lord will win her. . . . I always say to Him: I want that soul at the cost of no matter what suffering." [9] "Until the end of the world, Christ will agonize in His members, and it is by these sufferings and this agony that the Church, His spouse, will bring forth saints. . . . Since the death of Jesus, the law has not changed: souls are saved only by suffering and dying for them." [10] "The eternally glorified heart of Jesus will suffer no more, it can no longer suffer; henceforth it is our turn. . . . What happiness that it is our turn and no longer His to suffer now!" [11]

The Lord causes these reparatory souls to hear words such as these: "Have you not asked Me for a share in My passion? Choose: do you wish the joy of unclouded faith, ravishing you and flooding your soul with delights, or do you wish darkness, suffering, which will make you cooperate in the salvation of souls?" [12] Our Lord invites such souls to choose quite freely; but, as if powerless to resist, they abandon joy and choose suffering with all its darkness, so that light, sanctity, and salvation may be given to others.

From time to time, God allows them to see the hardness of hearts, and at certain times hell seems unchained to tear from them an act of despair. They fight for hours; it is a struggle of spirit against spirit; at no matter what cost, they must follow the Master to the end. He lets them understand with increasing clearness that He expects from them love of scorn and complete destruction, like that of the grain of wheat cast into the earth, which must die that it may bring forth much fruit. This life of reparation is that of souls called to the intimate service of the Lord Jesus.[18]

Such is the sign of perfect love, as it is described in *The Dialogue* of St. Catherine of Siena: "This is seen by the same sign that was given to the holy disciples after they had received the Holy Spirit, . . . not fearing pain, but rather glorying therein. . . . Through this charity, which is of the Holy Spirit, the soul participates in His

[8] *Mere Françoise de Jésus* (abridgment of her life, to which we have added extracts from her writings), p. 53.
[9] *Ibid.,* p. 54.
[10] *Ibid.,* pp. 143-45.
[11] *Ibid.,* p. 147.
[12] *Ibid.,* p. 177.
[18] *Ibid.,* p. 179.

will, fortifying her own." 14 In the same book, we read (it is the Lord who speaks):

These, I say, as if enamored of My honor, and famished for the food of souls, run to the table of the most holy cross, willing to suffer pain and endure much for the service of the neighbor, and desiring to preserve and acquire the virtues, bearing in their body the stigmata of Christ crucified, causing the crucified love which is theirs to shine, being visible through self-contempt and delighted endurance of the shames and vexations on every side. . . . Such as these follow the Immaculate Lamb, My only-begotten Son, who was both blessed and sorrowful on the cross. . . . These souls, thrown into the furnace of My charity, no part of their will remaining outside, but the whole of them being inflamed in Me, are like a brand wholly consumed in the furnace, so that no one can take hold of it to extinguish it, because it has become fire. In the same way, no one can seize these souls or draw them outside of Me." 15

This is perfect configuration to Jesus Christ; it is, in the life of reparation, the transforming union which has become fruitful and radiating. It is the participation in the state of Jesus as victim and, even in saints who have not received the priesthood properly so called, it is a very close union with the eternal Priest, in which are admirably realized St. Peter's words: "Unto whom coming, as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen and made honorable by God, be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." 18

This configuration to Christ crucified by the life of reparation is like the immediate prelude of eternal life.

A Great Example
The Reparatory Night of the Spirit in St. Paul of the Cross 1

The reading of the works of St. John of the Cross leads one to consider the night of the spirit chiefly as a personal passive purifica-

l* *The Dialogue,* chap. 74.
18 Ibid.., chap. 78.
18 Cf. I Pet. 2:4 f.

1 These pages appeared in the October, 1938, issue of the *Etudes carmélitaines,* which was devoted to the study of the "mystical night." This number contained articles dealing with a psychological description, a theo-

tion, which prepares the soul for the perfect union with God, called the transforming union. This purification, which in its passive aspect is a mystical state and implies infused contemplation, appears thus as necessary to remove the defects of proficients of whom the author speaks in *The Dark Night.*[2] This is particularly true of a secret spiritual pride, which is sometimes the cause of many illusions. The night of the spirit is a purgatory before death, but a purgatory in which the soul merits and grows greatly in love. Finally, this darkness and the affliction experienced in this state give way to the superior light and joy of the transforming union, the immediate prelude of the life of heaven. The winter of the night of the spirit seems followed by a springtime and a perpetual summer, after which there would no longer be an autumn.

Such is the impression created by the reading of *The Dark Night* and *The Living Flame of Love.* It may be said that for advanced souls the night of the spirit is only a tunnel to be traversed before entering the transforming union, and that afterward the soul need not pass through it again.

The lives of some great servants of God especially dedicated to reparation, to immolation for the salvation of souls or to the apostolate by interior suffering, make one think, however, of a prolongation of the night of the spirit even after their entrance into the transforming union. In such cases, this trial would no longer be chiefly purificatory; it would be above all reparative.

Though St. John of the Cross does not insist particularly on this point, he alludes several times to the interior trials endured by the saints for the salvation of sinners.[3] St. Teresa also mentions them when she writes of the great generosity of souls that have entered the seventh mansion.[4]

What should be our attitude toward a night of the spirit that is

logical explanation, the examination of natural or morbid cases which have some resemblances to this state.

[2] Bk. II, chap. *10.*

[3] Cf. *A Spiritual Canticle,* Part II, st. 20.

[4] *The Interior Castle,* seventh mansion, chap. 4: "His Majesty can bestow no greater favor on us than to give us a life such as was led by His beloved Son. Therefore, as I have often told you, I feel certain that these graces (of the transforming union) are sent to strengthen our weakness so that we may imitate Him by suffering much. We always find that those nearest to Christ our Lord bear the heaviest cross: think of what His glorious Mother and the apostles bore."

more reparatory than purificatory and is even prolonged over a lengthy period after the entrance into the transforming union, when the tried soul is already personally purified? We treated this question briefly in another work;5 here it is expedient to recall in regard to this point the incontrovertible principles and some significant facts.

First of all, the Christian mind cannot forget that the great interior sufferings which our Lord and His holy Mother experienced at the sight of sin and in the offering of themselves as victims for us were not for their purification but for our redemption, and that the more souls advance in the spiritual life, the more their interior sufferings resemble those of Jesus and Mary. The common opinion is that the servants of God are more particularly tried, whether it be that they need a more profound purification, or whether, following the example of our Lord, they must work by the same means as He used for a great spiritual cause, such as the foundation of a religious order or the salvation of many other souls. St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa almost continually experienced this, as the facts clearly show.

We shall point out here a particularly striking fact in this connection, and we shall then briefly compare the purifying night of the spirit with that which is chiefly reparatory and which contains an apostolate through suffering that is as fruitful as hidden.

Let us note first of all, though without insistence, a fairly characteristic fact, verified toward the close of the life of St. Alphonsus Liguori. A superficial reading of this period of his life, he was then eighty, might give the impression that he was experiencing the passive night of the senses, which is frequently accompanied by strong temptations against chastity and patience, virtues having their seat in the sensible part of the soul. The holy old man had at this time such violent temptations that his servant wondered if they would not cause him to lose his mind. But consideration of all the work already accomplished by grace in the soul of this great saint leads to the conclusion that this trial in his last years was not precisely for him the passive purification of the senses (although it had all the appearances of being so), but a series of afflictions that he endured chiefly for his neighbor and for the consolidation of his Order for which he had already suffered so much.

SL'Amour de Dieu et la croix de Jésus (1929), II, 625-31, 814-23.

There is an even more striking example in the life of St. Paul of the Cross, the founder of the Passionists. We may form an exact idea of his interior life from his numerous letters,® from the notes left by his confessor and director, Father John Mary, and from other documents of the period, quoted in the process of canonization and the preparatory work. Father Cajetan of the Holy Name of Mary, C.P., assembled the most important of these documents in his book, *Oraison et ascension mystique de saint Paul de la Croix.*l Father Cajetan kindly gave us some other documents which he plans to publish soon and which confirm the contents of those already published.

We shall cite here only the most significant facts in the long and austere life of the saint, which was wholly dedicated to the service of God. Born in 1694, St. Paul of the Cross, who lived to be eighty-one, became the founder of a religious order vowed to reparation.

Brought up in a thoroughly Christian manner and accustomed from his youth to complete abnegation and the practice of all the virtues, St. Paul very early in life had the affective prayer of simple gaze, and at about the age of nineteen a notable increase in piety. He called this period "his conversion"; in it appear the signs of the passive purification of the senses, accompanied, as is not unusual, by an attack of scruples.8

From this time on, Father Cajetan rightly distinguishes three periods in his mystical life. In the first, which lasted twelve years, the saint was raised progressively to the different degrees of prayer described by St. Teresa, even to the transforming union. In the second period, which lasted forty-five years, he had exceptionally profound experience of the life of reparation. In the third period, which comprised the last five years of his life, although his trials continued, consolations increased in proportion as he drew near the end of his journey.

In the first period, after the passive purification of the senses and the painful attack of scruples, the servant of God, who had received the grace of infused contemplation, remained for three or four hours at a time in prayer.® He gave seven hours daily to mental

• *Letiere,* edited by Father Amedeo, Rome, 1924, 4 vols. See also the first biography of the saint by Blessed V. Strambi, 1786.

' Museum Lessianum, Louvain, 1930.

• Cf. Father Cajetan, *op. cit.,* p. 8.

• *Op. cit.,* p. 12.

prayer. According to the testimony of his confessor, Father John Mary, he had experience of ecstatic prayer at about the age of twenty-four, being often rapt out of his senses. He then received great lights on the mysteries of faith and was favored with visions which gave him to understand that he should found an order consecrated to the Passion.[10] At this period he also received a vision of the Blessed Trinity, one of heaven, and another of hell; his faith "seemed to him changed into evidence." [11]

It seems certain that St. Paul of the Cross personally underwent the passive purification of the spirit at the age of twenty-six, chiefly during a retreat of forty days in 1720. Father Cajetan relates these trials at length.[12] At this time the saint heard words uttered against God, "diabolical words, which, he said, pierced his heart and soul." [13]

This passive purification of the spirit was completed by a contemplation of our Savior's passion,[14] a contemplation which led the saint "through love to make the most holy sufferings of Jesus his own." "The soul," he says, "all immersed in pure love, without an image, in most pure and naked faith, suddenly finds itself, when it so pleases the Sovereign Good, plunged equally into the ocean of the Savior's sufferings" and sees "that the Passion is wholly a work of love." [15]

From this time on, the saint's prayer consisted in putting on the sufferings of Jesus and in allowing himself to be immersed in our Savior's divinity.[16]

Before the age of thirty-one, St. Paul of the Cross received the grace of the transforming union. This fact can scarcely be doubted if, after carefully considering the loftiness of the purifying graces which preceded it, one takes cognizance of the testimony gathered by Father Cajetan.[17] This signal grace was even accompanied by the symbolism which sometimes manifests it sensibly: by the apparition of our Lord, of His Blessed Mother, and of several saints. St. Paul of the Cross also received a gold ring on which were represented the instruments of the Passion.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 1[illegible].
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 19.
[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 41-65.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 55.
[14] Ibid., pp. 57-73.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 57.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 62.
[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 85-97.

When we see to what close union with Jesus crucified the servant of God attained before the age of thirty-one, and consider that he was to live to the age of eighty-one and found an order vowed to reparation, we are less astonished at seeing him associated afterward for a period of forty-five years with the sorrowful life of our Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, after receiving the grace of the transforming union, he had, according to the testimony of his confessor,[18] to pass through forty-five years of interior desolations, most painful abandonment, during which, "from time to time only, the Lord granted him a short respite." [19]

His life was truly a life of reparation in all its depth and elevation; it was the apostolate by spiritual suffering to an exceptional degree. This suffering consisted not only in the subtraction of sensible consolations, but, as it were, in the eclipse of the virtues of faith, hope, and charity. The saint believed himself abandoned by God, he believed that God was irritated with him. His temptations to despair and sadness were overwhelming; and yet in this interminable trial, St. Paul showed great patience, perfect resignation to the divine will, and extreme kindness to all who approached him, as Father Cajetan relates.[20] In the *Summary* of the ordinary processes in view of his canonization, are the following declarations: "One day St. Paul said to his director: 'If anyone should ask me at any time what I was thinking about, it seems to me that I could reply that I was thinking of God.' " [21] This was likewise the case even in his greatest spiritual desolations, at a time when it seemed to him that he no longer had faith, hope, or charity.[22] He was accustomed to say: "It seems to me impossible not to think of God, since our spirit is wholly filled with God and we are entirely in Him." [23]

Actually, when St. Paul of the Cross went through the streets of Rome exclaiming: "A via Pauli, libera nos, Domine," he was unable to breathe spiritually except in God. Day and night for forty-five years his prayer was a painful, heroic, incessant prayer, which sought God ardently, and which sought Him to give Him to the souls for whom this great saint suffered. More fruitful than years of preaching inspired by a lesser love, these painful years were a

[18] *Ibid.,* pp. 2, 115-77.
[19] *Ibid.,* p. 2.
[20] *Ibid.,* p. 96.
[21] *Summary of the Process,* I, J17, 64.
[22] *Ibid.,* I, j24, 101.
[23] *Ibid.,* I, j24, 105.

sublime realization of the Master's words: "We ought always to pray, and not to faint." [24] The saint's life and trials throw light on the import of the following thought of St. John of the Cross: "A single act of pure love can do more good in the Church than many exterior works" inspired by a lesser charity.

Near the close of these forty-five years of suffering, St. Paul of the Cross experienced intervals of consolation. He felt himself drawn into our Savior's wounds, and Jesus crucified said to him: "You are in My heart." [28] The Blessed Virgin appeared to him, and also the soul of a priest condemned to purgatory, for whom he was to suffer. Our Savior's passion was, so to speak, imprinted on his heart.[26]

After forty-five years, his trial was mitigated, and spiritual consolations increased progressively during the last five years of his long life. He had an apparition of our Lady of Sorrows and other favors in the sacristy of the church of SS. John and Paul in Rome, ecstasies with and without levitation. The last months of his life, at the age of eighty-one, were like the immediate prelude of the beatitude of heaven.

The facts we have just recounted are certainly most exceptional. From time to time, however, we find, more particularly in contemplative orders vowed to prayer and immolation, somewhat similar facts in souls that have a reparatory vocation and have made a vow consecrating themselves to this apostolate through suffering. We have known three very generous Carmelites and a priest, all of whom seemed to be in an interminable night of the spirit (thirty and forty years); yet these souls were apparently already purified, but their oblation for the salvation of sinners seemed to have been accepted.

After the examination of these facts, in the light of principles we believe that we can reach the following conclusion: When the night of the spirit is chiefly purificatory, under the influence of the grace that is exercised mainly by the gift of understanding, the theological virtues and humility are purified of all human alloy. As we have shown elsewhere,[27] the formal motive of these virtues is

[24] Luke 18:1.
[26] Father Cajetan, *op. cit.,* p. 167.
[28] *Ibid.*
[27] *L'Amour de Dieu et la croix de Jésus,* II, 549-656.

freed from every accessory motive, and their primary object brought into powerful relief above every secondary object. The soul thus purified can pass beyond the formulas of mysteries and enter into "the deep things of God," as St. Paul says.28 Then, in spite of all temptations against faith and hope, the soul firmly believes by a direct act in a most pure and sublime manner which surmounts temptation; it believes for the sole and most pure motive supernaturally attained: the authority of God revealing. It also hopes for the sole reason that He is ever helpful, infinite Mercy. It loves Him in the most complete aridity, because He is infinitely better in Himself than all the gifts which He could grant us. The first revealing Truth, formal motive of infused faith, the divine, helpful Mercy, formal motive of hope, the infinite Goodness of God sovereignly lovable in itself, then appear more and more in their transcendent supernaturalness like three stars of first magnitude in the night of the spirit.28

When this trial is chiefly reparatory, when it has principally for its end to make the already purified soul work for tbe salvation of its neighbor, then it preserves the same lofty characteristics just described, but takes on an additional character more reminiscent of the intimate sufferings of Jesus and Mary, who did not need to be purified. In this case the suffering makes one think of that of a life-saver who, in a storm, struggles heroically to save from death those who are on the point of drowning. Spiritual life-savers, like St. Paul of the Cross, struggle not only for hours and months, but sometimes for years in order to snatch souls from eternal death; and, in a way, these reparative souls must resist the temptations of the souls they seek to save that they may come efficaciously to their assistance. Reparative souls are intimately associated with our Savior's sorrowful life; in them St. Paul's words 30 are fully realized:

*· Cf. I Cor. 2:10.

æ As far as we are acquainted with the life of Father Surin, we think that he underwent this passive purification and acquired great merits in it.

•°Rom. 8:17. Moreover, even when the night of the spirit is chiefly purificatory and precedes the transforming union, often there exists in it to some degree the other character of reparation for one's neighbor. This statement can be verified in Bk. Ill, chap. 11, sect. 1 of the *Life of St. Vincent de Paul* by Abelly (cf. *Revue d'ascétique et mystique,* 1932, pp. 398 ff.), where the author says that St. Vincent accepted to suffer for a doctor of the Sorbonne who was greatly tormented by temptations against faith. Then for four years St. Vincent de Paul himself had to resist such strong temptations against this

"Heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ; yet so, if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him."

virtue that he kept asking himself whether or not he consented to them. At this time he wrote the *Credo* on a sheet of paper which he placed over his heart, and when the temptation was most violent, he would press the *Credo* against his heart to give himself an exterior sign of his fidelity. At the end of these four years, St. Vincent de Paul's faith was notably increased by all the heroic acts he had had to make while passing through this tunnel. We believe that the same observation must be made in regard to the greatest interior sufferings of the holy Curé of Ars and also in regard to the passive purification of the spirit which St. Teresa of the Child Jesus underwent toward the end of her life (cf. *Histoire d'une âme,* 1923, chaps. 9, 12). What she wrote at this time is quite revealing and should be reread.

Cf. also L. Reypens, "La nuit de l'esprit chez Ruusbroec" *{Etudes carmélitaines,* October, 1938, p. 78) on the summit of the mystical life in emptiness and abandonment.

The night of the spirit seems also to have been prolonged after the transforming union in the life of Venerable Mary of the Incarnation, Ursuline of Tours and Quebec. Cf. P. J. Klein, M.S.C., *L'Itinéraire mystique de la vénérable Mère Marie de l'incarnation,* Paris, 1937. The conclusions of this author's thesis are, however, very debatable on several points. Cf. *Ami du clergé,* February 16, 1939, pp. 98-100.

To conclude we shall quote from a *Sermon for the Monday before Palm Sunday* (transi. Hugueny, I, 265-69) by Tauler, a great spiritual writer whom St. Paul of the Cross often read. This is how Tauler describes the divine union in the higher faculties: "The spirit is then ravished above all its faculties, in a desolate desert of which no one can speak, in the secret darkness of the good without determined mode. There the spirit is introduced into the unity of Unity, simple and without determined mode, so profoundly that it loses the feeling of every distinction. . . . But when these men return to themselves, they discern all things in joy and perfection, as no one can do. This discernment is born in simple Unity. Thus they discern with clarity and truth all the articles of pure faith. . . . No one understands true discernment better than those who attain to Unity. It is called, and it truly is, *ineffable darkness,* and yet it is the essential light. It is also called a *desert desolate* beyond all expression; no one can find a road or anything definite in it: it is superior to every mode.

"This is how this darkness must be understood: It is a light which no created intellect can naturally attain or comprehend. And it is a savage place, because it has no (natural) way of access. When the spirit is introduced here, it is above itself. . . . Man should then in great humility keep himself submissive to God's will. God then demands from man a greater detachment than ever . . . , more purity, more simplicity . . . , profound humility, and all the virtues which develop in the lower faculties. It is thus that man becomes the familiar of God and thence is born a divine man." St. Paul of the Cross, who often read Tauler, must have read this page, which seems to explain in part the reparatory night in which he lived for so long a time after having been raised to the transforming union.

CHAPTER L

The Influence of the Holy Ghost in the Perfect Soul

"If thou didst know the gift of God!"
John 4: io

FOR a clear understanding of the nature of the mystical union, we must treat of the influence of the Holy Ghost in the perfect soul by recalling the most indisputable and lofty principles commonly taught on this subject. To see their meaning and import, we shall consider first the Holy Ghost as the supreme gift, and secondly what follows this gift in the perfect soul.

The Holy Ghost, Uncreated Gift

The Holy Ghost is called the Gift par excellence. Christ alluded and more than alluded to this title when He said to the Samaritan woman: "If thou didst know the gift of God!" The created gift of sanctifying grace, united to charity, in itself immensely surpasses all natural gifts, those of the richest imagination, of the keenest intellect, of the most energetic will. Grace, the seed of eternal life, even immensely exceeds the natural life of the angels, the natural strength of their intellect and will; it also exceeds, and that greatly, as St. Paul says, graces that are *gratis datae* and, so to speak, extrinsic, like the gift of miracles, the gift of tongues, and prophecy.

The Holy Ghost is the uncreated Gift, infinitely superior to that of sanctifying grace and of charity, superior to every degree of charity and every degree of glory.

He is, first of all, the uncreated Gift, as the final and eternal term of the divine fecundity of the heavenly Father and of His

Son. By the eternal generation of the Word, the infinitely good Father communicates to the Son all the divine nature, gives Him to be God of God, light of light. The Father and the Son breathe forth the personal Love that is the Holy Ghost.[1] The third divine Person thus proceeds from the mutual love of the Father and the Son; He is the uncreated Gift which the first two Persons give each other, the unique gift, by an eternal spiration that communicates all the divine nature to the Holy Ghost.

St. Thomas explains[2] why the Holy Ghost is called the personal and uncreated Gift. He says that every gift proceeds from a gratuitous donation whose source is love, and the first thing we give to some one is the love by which we wish him well. Thus love is the first of all gifts, the principle of all the others. Consequently the Holy Ghost, who is personal subsistent Love, deserves to be called the personal and uncreated Gift.

This supreme Gift, which the first two divine Persons make each other from all eternity, has been given to us in time by our Lord Jesus Christ. He had already given us the Eucharist at the Last Supper, and His precious blood on the cross; He had given us grace by all the sacraments. Lastly, He willed to give us the supreme Gift, the uncreated Gift, to crown all His benefactions. He had promised to send us the Holy Ghost and, in fact, He sent Him to us on Pentecost.

The grandeur of this supreme gift appears more clearly in comparison with the others, even with the most sublime among them. Our Savior had already merited for us all the effects of our predestination: our vocation to Christian life, our justification or conversion, final perseverance, and the glory of the elect redeemed by His blood; but He willed to give us still more, to bestow on us the uncreated Gift, the Holy Ghost.

When the apostles received the Holy Ghost, they were enlightened, strengthened, confirmed in grace, and transformed; and, under the direction of the Holy Ghost, they persevered even to martyrdom.

[1] In the Blessed Trinity we distinguish the essential love common to the three divine Persons, the notional or spiraled love, by which the Father and the Son spirate the Holy Ghost, and personal love, which is the Holy Ghost Himself, the term of active spiration, as the Word is the term of eternal generation.

[2] *Simma,* Ia, q. 38, a. 2.

This discussion shows why the names proper to the Holy Ghost are personal Love and the uncreated Gift. By appropriation, He is also called the Comforter. He is, indeed, the great spiritual friend who comforts us in the sorrows of life, in anxiety which sometimes grows into anguish. Thus He comforted the apostles, deprived of our Lord's sensible presence, when the great difficulties of their apostolate were beginning. For each of us Pentecost was renewed when we received confirmation.

The Activity of the Uncreated Gift in Our Souls

We have truly received the supreme Gift. Through charity and the gift of wisdom, from which proceeds a quasi-experimental knowledge of the presence in our souls of the divine Persons, who always remain united, we can enjoy this Gift.

At this point in our study, we consider it advisable to insist on the principal effects attributed to the Holy Ghost by appropriation, although the Father and the Son also concur in their production, as They do in every effect of the divine power that is common to the three Persons.[3]

The uncreated Gift first of all strengthens, preserves, and increases the created gift of sanctifying grace in our souls. Therefore, says St. Thomas,[4] our Lord, speaking to the Samaritan woman, calls grace "a fountain of water, springing up into life everlasting." In contrast to dead water preserved in cisterns or ditches, living water is not separated from its gushing source and, under the impulsion of its source, always flows toward the ocean.

[3] Cf. St. Thomas, *Contra Gentes,* Bk. IV, chaps. 21 f., "De effectibus attributis Spiritui Sancto." Among these effects, St. Thomas points out especially infused contemplation and infused love, which give the holy liberty of the children of God. In chapter 22 he says: "The special characteristic of friendship is to converse with one's friend. Moreover, the conversation of man with God is by the contemplation of Him, as the Apostle said (Phil. 3:20): 'Our conversation is in heaven.' Because therefore the Holy Spirit makes us lovers of God, it follows that by the Holy Spirit we are made contemplators of God; whence the Apostle says (II Cor. 3:18): 'But we all beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.' " These effects attributed to the Holy Ghost by appropriation are also produced by the Father and the Son, for they are effects of the divine power common to the three Persons, but they have a special resemblance to personal Love, which is the proper name of the Holy Ghost.

[4] *In Joanne?»,* 4:14.

Thus sanctifying grace is not separated from the source of living water, the Holy Ghost; it is He Himself who preserves it in us and gives it that strength of impulsion which drives it in a way toward the spiritual ocean that is eternal life. In this sense St. Paul says: "The charity of God is poured forth in oiir hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us." [5]

Hence the Holy Ghost sometimes gives the perfect soul a confident certitude of being in the state of grace, according to the words of St. Paul: "The Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God." [6] He gives us this testimony, says St. Thomas,[7] by the filial affection which He excites in us, and by which, in a way, He makes Himself felt by us as the life of our life.

However, this sort of transitory certitude is far from having the clarity of evidence, for we cannot perfectly discern the filial affection inspired by the Holy Ghost from a natural act of love of God, from an inefficacious love, accompanied at times by a certain lyricism, which may exist without grace, as happens in some poets.

The Holy Ghost "dwells in light inaccessible" which seems obscure to us because it is too strong for us, but His inspiration reassures us, according to the words of the Apocalypse: "To him that overcometh, I will give the hidden manna, . . . and a new name written, which no man knoweth, but he that receiveth it." [8]

For the same reason the Holy Ghost strengthens our faith and makes it penetrating and sweet. St. Paul says: "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. . . . Now we have received . . . the Spirit that is of God, that we may know the things that are given us from God." [8]

In consequence also, the Holy Ghost strengthens the certitude of our hope, a certitude which is not yet that of salvation, but that of tending toward salvation;[10] a certitude that increases in the measure in which we draw near to the end of the journey.

Lastly and above all, the Holy Ghost, personal Love, excites in perfect souls an infused love of God and of neighbor notably

5 Rom. 5:5.
• Rom. 8:*16.*
'In Epist. ad Rom., 8:16.
' Apoc. 2:17.
8 Cf. I Cor. 2:10, 12.
10 Cf. St. Thomas, Ila Ilae, q. 18, a. 4.

different from the other acts of charity. It is a love to which the soul could not move itself with the help of common actual grace; it requires a special inspiration, a superior operating grace. There is in it a visit of the Lord; it is then the Holy Ghost Himself who moves us to love Him. He causes this infused love, of which He is at one and the same time the beginning and the end, to well up from our hearts. We shall never be able to love God as much as He loves us by His uncreated and eternal dilection; but between Him and us there is a certain equality of love when it is the Holy Ghost Himself who gives rise in us to the infused love which He purifies and strengthens until our entrance into heaven.

It is of this infused love that the author of *The Imitation* speaks, when he says:

> O Lord God, my holy Lover, when Thou shalt come into my heart, all that is within me shall be filled with joy. Thou art my glory and the exultation of my heart. Thou art my hope and my refuge in the day of my tribulation. But because I am as yet weak in love and imperfect in virtue, therefore do I stand in need of being strengthened and comforted by Thee. Wherefore do Thou visit me often, and instruct me in Thy holy discipline . . . so that I may become . . . courageous to suffer, and steadfast to persevere. A great thing is love [excited by Thee], a great good above all goods. It alone lighteneth all that is burdensome, and beareth equally all that is unequal, for it carrieth a burden without being burdened, and maketh all else that is bitter sweet and savory. The noble love of Jesus impelleth us to do great things, and exciteth us always to desire that which is the more perfect. . . . Love often knoweth no measure, but groweth fervent above all measure. . . . Love watcheth, and sleeping slumbereth not. When weary, it is not tired; when straitened, it is not constrained; when frightened, it is not disturbed; but like a vivid flame and a burning torch, it mounteth upward and securely passeth through all.[11]

This teaching, which is confirmed by the experience of the saints, rests on revelation itself. St. Paul tells us: "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings. . . . He asketh for the saints according to God";[12] "according to God," that is, according to the divine good pleasure, which He knows perfectly.

[11] Bk. III, chap. 5, *passim.*
[11] Rom. 8:26 f.

In *The Dialogue* of St. Catherine of Siena, the Lord Himself explains these words, saying: "In perfect souls the Holy Ghost weeps tears of fire," [13] in particular at the sight of the sins that lead souls to perdition. These spiritual tears often obtain the remission of great sins.

For the same reason the Holy Ghost is called the Father of the poor, of those especially who love holy poverty. He nourishes them spiritually like a mother by His divine charity; from time to time He gives them a holy joy and, as it were, a foretaste of eternal life.[14]

He inspires them with the love of the cross, that is, the love of Jesus crucified, of His sufferings, of His holy humiliations. He gives them the desire to share therein in the measure willed for them by Providence, and He makes them find peace, strength, and occasionally joy in this desire. The Holy Ghost configures His faithful servants to Christ crucified, and through them, through their sufferings, He saves souls.

He shows faithful souls the value of His divine inspirations which, when not resisted, lead to true sanctity. As a result, these souls have an increasingly deeper understanding of the effect which the consecration of the soul to the Holy Ghost may produce when well made.

Lastly, He sometimes gives most perfect souls as it were a cer-

[13] Chap. 91.

[14] Cf. St. Catherine of Siena, *Dialogue* (transl. by E. Cartier, Paris, 1855, chap. 141): "(In malady and affliction) the Holy Ghost, like a tender mother, nourishes these men in the bosom of divine charity. He makes them free and sovereign, delivering them from the servitude of self-love. For where the fire of My infinite charity burns, is never found that water of self-love which extinguishes this sweet fire in the soul. . . . The Holy Ghost nourishes the just man, He inebriates him with sweetness, overwhelms him with inestimable riches. . . . Then the soul accepts all afflictions, nothing casts it down, nothing shakes it; it receives great strength and a foretaste of eternal life." [This chapter does not appear in the English edition. Tr.]

Father Lallemant, S.J., writes in *La Doctrine spirituelle* (4th principle, chap. 2, a.4): "The Holy Ghost consoles us especially in three things: First, in the uncertainty of our salvation . . . ; a soul that has had some experimental knowledge of God is rarely lost. Secondly, the Holy Ghost consoles us in the temptations of the devil, in the contradictions and afflictions of this life. . . . Thirdly, the Holy Ghost consoles us in our exile here on earth, far from God. . . . Holy souls feel, as it were, an infinite void in themselves, which all creatures cannot fill and which can be filled only by the enjoyment of God. As long as they are separated from Him, they languish and suffer a long martyrdom, which would be unbearable to them without the consolations which the Holy Ghost gives them from time to time."

titude of their predestination and salvation by a special revelation or by the equivalent of such a revelation, by granting them, together with a savor of eternal life, the experimental knowledge of sanctifying grace as the seed of glory.

Conclusion

All theologians accept these principles which are manifestly based on revelation.[16] They lift us gently toward what the great spiritual writers have said about the mystical union, arid or consoled, occasionally ecstatic, the full development of which is called the transforming union. Taking especially St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross as our guides, we shall discuss this mystical union, properly so called. What these two saints say about this union seems less exceptional after a study of the higher laws of the development of sanctifying grace, of charity, and of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. One sees in them an excellent fruit which forms mysteriously but normally in the flower of charity under the ever more intimate influence of the interior Master, of the Comforter, who instructs by His unction, without noise of words, and who draws the soul always more strongly to Himself.

The mystical union is, in our opinion, the normal though eminent fruit of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in our souls. The three divine Persons dwell in the soul in the state of grace as in a temple where they can be and sometimes are the object of a quasi-experimental knowledge and of an infused love. They thus make Themselves felt as the life of our life. When this quasi-experimental knowledge of the divine Persons present in us and this infused love have reached their full, normal development, they constitute the mystical union, properly so called.

The indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in our souls is thus the center from which our spiritual life springs and to which it returns. It is the realization of St. John's words: "God is charity; and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him." [16]

The truth of this doctrine is still more evident when we consider not a given individual soul, but the human soul itself and especially

[15] St. Thomas sets forth this common teaching, as we have pointed out, in the *Contra Gentes* (Bk. IV, chaps. 21 f.), where he describes the effects of the presence of the Holy Ghost in us.

[16] Cf. I John 4:16.

divine grace itself. The grace of the virtues and the gifts is not only the seed of the mystical union; it is normally the seed of the beatific vision and of its immediate prelude: *gratia est semen gloriae,* a doctrine profoundly understood by Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity, a valiant Carmelite of Dijon. The mystery of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in the center of her soul was the great reality of her interior life.[17]

[17] *Sœur Elisabeth de la Trinité, Souvenirs* (ed. 1935), the story of her life and extracts from her writings. In less than thirty years, ninety thousand copies of this book have been distributed in France.

See also M. M. Philippon, O.P., *The Spiritual Doctrine of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity* (Westminster, Md., 1947). Cf. especially the following chapters: "Toward Transforming Union," pp. 22-32; "The Indwelling of the Blessed Trinity," pp. 46-80; "The Praise of Glory," pp. 81-100; "Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity and the Souls of Priests," pp. 135-53; "The Gifts of the Holy Ghost," pp. 154-88; "The Last Retreat of *Laudem Gloriae,"* pp.

CHAPTER LI

Arid Mystical Union and Ecstatic Union According to St. Teresa

WHEN we spoke [1] of the degrees of contemplative prayer in proficients, taking St. Teresa [2] as our guide, we described arid quiet, next sweet quiet, in which the will alone is captivated by God, and lastly the prayer of simple union, in which not only the will is seized by God, but also the understanding and the memory, and in which the imagination is as if asleep, because all the activity of the soul takes place in its higher part. There is even at times a beginning of ecstasy or an initial suspension of the exercise of the exterior senses. Following what St. Teresa wrote in the sixth mansion, we shall now discuss arid and painful union, which corresponds to the night of the spirit, then ecstatic union or the spiritual betrothal, and lastly, in the following chapter, the transforming union or spiritual marriage.

Arid and Painful Mystical Union

St. Teresa speaks of this union at the beginning of the sixth mansion,[3] but she describes especially its concomitant outward phenomena. St. John of the Cross, on the other hand, shows more the intimate nature of this state under the name of the night of the spirit, or the passive purification of the spirit, as we saw at the beginning of the fourth part of this work.

God makes the soul desire the immense good which He is preparing for it; and He causes it to pass through a terrible crucible, of which St. Teresa writes:

1 Cf. *supra,* chap. 30.
2 *The Interior Castle,* fourth and fifth mansions.
3 Chap. I.

An outcry is raised against such a person by those amongst whom she lives. . . . They say she wants to pass for a saint, that she goes to extremes in piety. . . . Persons she thought were her friends desert her, making the most bitter remarks of all. . . . They make a thousand scoffing remarks. . . . The worst of it is, these troubles do not blow over, but last all her life. . . .

Yet, oh! the rest would seem trifling in comparison could I relate the interior torments met with here, but they are impossible to describe. Let us first speak of the trial of meeting with so timorous and inexperienced a confessor that nothing seems safe to him. . . . The poor soul, beset by the same fears, seeks its confessor as judge, and feels a torture and dismay at his condemnation that can only be realized by those who have experienced it themselves. For one of the severe trials of these souls, especially if they have lived wicked lives, is their belief that God permits them to be deceived in punishment for their sins. While actually receiving these graces they feel secure and cannot but suppose that these favors proceed from the Spirit of God; but this state lasts a very short time, while the remembrance of their misdeeds is ever before them, so that when, as is sure to happen, they discover any faults in themselves, these torturing thoughts return.

The soul is quieted for a time when the confessor reassures it, although it returns later on to its former apprehensions, but when he augments its fears they become almost unbearable. Especially is this the case when such spiritual dryness ensues that the mind feels as if it never had thought of God nor ever will be able to do so. When men speak of Him, they seem to be talking of some person heard of long ago. . . .

Her understanding being too obscure to discern thrtruth, she believes all that the imagination, which now has the upper hand, puts before her mind, besides crediting the falsehoods suggested to her by the devil, whom doubtless our Lord gives leave to tempt her. The evil spirit even tries to make her think God has rejected her. . . . No comfort can be found in this tempest of trouble. . . .

There is no other remedy in such a tempest except to wait for the mercy of God who, unexpectedly, by some casual word or unforeseen circumstance, suddenly dispels all these sorrows. Then every cloud of trouble disappears and the mind is left full of light and far happier than before. It praises our Lord God like one who has come out victorious from a dangerous battle, for it was He who won the victory. The soul is fully conscious that the conquest was not its own. . . . Thus it realizes its weakness and how little man can help himself if God forsake him. This truth now needs no demonstration.

Sixth mansion, chap. i.

The soul then understands far better the Master's words: "Without Me you can do nothing" in the order of salvation, and it is led more and more to admit, with St. Augustine and St. Thomas, that grace is efficacious of itself, that it excites our effort instead of being rendered efficacious by it.

What conduct should be observed in this trial? St. Teresa tells us in the same chapter:

> Their comfort must come from above—nothing earthly can help them. This great God wishes us to acknowledge His sovereignty and our own misery. . . . The best remedy for these crosses . . . is to perform external works of charity and to trust in the mercy of God, which never fails those who hope in Him. . . .
>
> The devils also bring about exterior trials which, being more unusual, need not be mentioned. They are far less painful, for whatever the demons may do, I believe they never succeed in paralyzing the faculties or disturbing the soul in the former manner. In fact, the reason is able to discern that the evil spirits can do no more harm than God permits; and while the mind has not lost its powers, all sufferings are comparatively insignificant."

Farther on,[8] St. Teresa speaks of a still more painful purification of love, which occurs at the entrance to the seventh mansion, "as the purification of purgatory introduces the soul into heaven." But the soul is conscious, while enduring this suffering, that it is an eminent favor.

After the interior sufferings described at the beginning of the sixth mansion, in which there is a painful presence of God, the soul receives such knowledge of the divine majesty that frequently partial or complete ecstasy follows.

Ecstatic Union; Its Manifestation and Nature

Ecstasy is the suspension of the exterior senses; it does not necessarily imply levitation, or the elevation of the body above the ground. This suspension of the exterior senses is manifested by more or less marked insensibility, the slowing of the respiration, the diminution of vital heat. According to St. Teresa: "One perceives that the natural heat of the body is perceptibly lessened; the

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] Sixth mansion, chap. 11.

coldness increases, though accompanied with exceeding joy and sweetness." 7 The body then becomes motionless, the gaze fixed on an invisible object; sometimes the eyelids close.

Instead of weakening the body, this state gives it new strength.® A person who ordinarily would find difficulty in kneeling for a long time, does so without difficulty in the state of ecstasy. Occasionally the suspension of the senses is incomplete and allows the ecstatic to dictate the revelations received, as happened to St. Catherine of Siena.9

Whence arises the loss of the use of the exterior senses in this state? It proceeds from the soul's absorption in God, which is itself the result of a very special grace of light and love.10 The abundant light then given, for example, on the mysteries of the redemptive Incarnation, of the Eucharist as the expression of the immense goodness of God, produces lively admiration and great love of God. The will is touched and, as it were, wounded by the divine attraction, and moves toward God with great impetuosity, like a magnetized needle toward a pole. The admiration of the intellect grows through love, and love through admiration; as St. Francis de Sales says: "The sight of beauty makes us love it, and love makes us look at it."

The soul, thus ravished with admiration and love for God, loses the use of its senses because all its activity passes over into its higher part. St. Thomas noted this principle clearly: "When the soul tends wholly to the act of one power, man is abstracted from the act of another power";11 when the soul is wholly moved to the act of one of its faculties, the exercise of the other faculties is suspended. If at times a scholar, like Archimedes, is so absorbed by speculation that he no longer hears speech addressed to him, with what far greater reason is this true of the contemplative soul at the time when a very strong grace makes it perceive the infinite majesty of God and absorbs it in this blessed contemplation! Then ecstasy, which follows this eminent infused contemplation, is not, properly speaking, extraordinary; it may be the normal result of the soul's

' *Life,* by herself, chap, *to,* par. *t.*

• *Ibid.,* par. 29.

• Ecstatic union does not of itself suspend the functions of the organic or vegetative organism, that is, those of nutrition and respiration. Cf. St. Thomas, *De veritate,* q. 13, a.4; Ila Ilae, q. 175, a. 5.

10 Cf. St. Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God,* Bk. VII, chaps. 4 ff.

11 *De veritate,* q. 13, a. 3: Ila Ilae, q. 175, a. 2.

absorption in God, according to the principle which we have just recalled. As we shall see, it is otherwise in rapture, which seizes the soul abruptly and violently in order to raise it to lofty contemplation; then it precedes this contemplation instead of following it.

In ecstatic love, is there still liberty and merit? There most certainly is;[12] as St. Thomas shows,[13] the liberty of the act of love, the condition of merit, disappears only when the soul sees God face to face in heaven. Then it is invincibly attracted by Him and loves Him with a love that is sovereignly spontaneous but no longer free; it is a love superior to liberty.

Tire duration of divine ecstasy varies greatly; complete ecstasy generally lasts only some minutes, sometimes for half an hour. However, there are cases of prolonged incomplete ecstasy, which St. Teresa says "lasts occasionally for an entire day."[14] There are even complete ecstasies which have lasted as much as four days, or even longer.[15]

Ecstasy ordinarily ends by a spontaneous awakening; only little by little does the soul recover the use of its senses, as if it were returning from another world. The awakening may be provoked by an oral or simply a mental command given by a religious superior. In this connection it should be observed that, in the judgment of the Church, religious obedience during ecstasy is one of the characteristic signs of its divine origin, and a sign which eliminates the hypothesis of hysteria. The ecstatic who does not obey a religious superior lacks the sign considered by the Church as a touchstone, which shows the conformity of the ecstatic's will with the divine will expressed by the superior. It should, in fact, be kept clearly in mind that if in hysteria there is suggestion by hypnosis, it is only through the influence of an imperious will and a strong imagination on a sickly sensibility, with surrender of the will and no merit. In this case there is lacking the moral character of religious obedience, in which, through virtue, a human will subjects itself to the divine will, and even comes out of ecstasy to obey in this way.

12 Although certain authors have held the contrary, this is the definite teaching of St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. John Chrysostom, St. Bernard, St. Thomas, Suarez, Alvarez de Paz, Scaramelli, and Philip of the Blessed Trinity.

13 Cf. *Summa,* la Ilae, q. 10, a. 1, 2; Ila Ilae, q. 175, a. 1 ad 3um.

14 Sixth mansion, chap. 6.

'· Cf. A. Poulain, *The Graces of Interior Prayer,* Part III, chap. 18, no. 7.

False ecstasies are often easy to discern from true ones. The ecstasy of divine origin differs greatly from the so-called hysterical ecstasy, because in the divine there is no trace of the character of morbid excitation, of strained and passionate agitation, of entirely physical enjoyment followed by great depression. Divine ecstasy is a movement of the entire being, body and soul, toward the divine object that is contemplated. In a great calm, it is the absorption of the soul ravished out of its senses by a mysterious power, generally following a vision received in the imagination or the intellect.[16] The end of the ecstasy is the return to the natural state in a calm manner, accompanied by simple regret over the disappearance of the vision and the celestial joy that it gave. This was observed in particular in the ecstasies of St. Bernadette Soubirous, likewise in those of St. Teresa and many other servants of God.

It should be noted also that the natural swoon may have as its cause an excessive over-excitement of the imagination or even the lively impressions of mental prayer on a frail and weak constitution. These swoons should be eliminated as much as possible; they should be resisted and the organism strengthened by more substantial food.[17]

Lastly, it should be kept in mind that there can be diabolical ecstasies, which are a sort of obsession. If a person lives in sin and seems to have ecstasies during which he gives way to unseemly contortions, utters incoherent words which he immediately forgets, seeks frequented places that he may become a spectacle, and if besides, in this state, he receives communications leading to evil or to good for an evil end, these are so many signs, as Benedict XIV declares, of diabolical ecstasy.[18]

What Distinguishes Rapture from Ecstasy

Simple ecstasy is a sort of swoon which is produced sweetly following a wound of love. St. Teresa says: "The soul is conscious

[18] Cf. *infra,* chap. 57: "The differences between extraordinary divine facts and morbid phenomena."

[17] Cf. St. Teresa, *The Book of the Foundations* (chap. 6): "I advise prioresses to eliminate with all possible care from their monasteries these long swoons which take their energy away from the faculties and the senses themselves. The soul can no longer make them obey it, and thereby loses merits which might have been acquired by a constant solicitude to please God."

[18] *De servorum Dei beatificatione,* Bk. III, chap. 49, no. 5. Also Cajetan on IIa IIae, q. 173, a.3.

of having received a delicious wound but cannot discover how, nor who gave it, yet recognizes it as a most precious grace and hopes the hurt will never heal. The soul makes amorous complaints to its Bridegroom, even uttering them aloud; nor can it control itself, knowing that though He is present He will not manifest Himself so that it may enjoy Him." [19] It is like a fleeting interview before more continual union, called the transforming union or spiritual marriage.

The swoon of ecstasy differs from the impetuosity and violence of rapture, in which the soul is suddenly seized by God as by a superior force that carries it away. St. Thomas noted this. He says: "Rapture adds something to ecstasy. For ecstasy means simply a going out of oneself by being placed outside one's proper order; while rapture denotes a certain violence in addition." [20]

Often the spiritual espousals are concluded in rapture;[21] the soul is as if inebriated and can concern itself only with God. Rapture is followed by the flight of the spirit, in which the soul believes itself transported into a new, wholly divine region.[22]

The Effects of Ecstatic Union

Such absorption in God produces great detachment from creatures, whose nothingness becomes more and more apparent; it also gives rise to immense sorrow for sins committed and for all that separates the soul from God. The soul also sees with increasing clearness the value of our Savior's passion and of Mary's sufferings at the foot of the cross, and from this contemplation draws admirable patience to bear the trials which the Lord will send it that it may work for its neighbor's salvation.

In short, the effects of ecstatic union are great holiness of life. For this reason St. Francis de Sales says: "When you see a person who has raptures in prayer . . . and, nevertheless, no ecstasy in his life, that is, does not lead a lofty life of union with God, by the abnegation of worldly desires and the mortification of natural wishes and inclinations, by interior sweetness, simplicity, humility,

[19] *The Interior Castle,* sixth mansion, chap. 2.
[20] *Summa,* Ila Ilae, q. 175, a. 2 ad mm.
[21] *The Interior Castle,* sixth mansion, chap. 4.
[22] *Ibid.,* chap. 5.

and especially by continual charity, believe me, Theotime, all these raptures are seriously doubtful and dangerous." [28]

The Purification of Love

After ecstatic union, as a preparation for the transforming union, there is a very painful purification of love, of which St. Teresa speaks at the end of the sixth mansion. The saint says:

The heart receives, it knows not how or whence, a blow as from a fiery dart . . . in the very depths and center of the soul. . . . This resembles the pains of purgatory. . . . The spiritual torments are so much more keen that the bodily ones remain unnoticed. . . . She feels a strange loneliness, finding no companionship in any earthly creature. . . . Aleanwhile all society is a torture to her. She is like one suspended in mid-air, who can neither touch the earth nor mount to heaven; she is unable to reach the water while parched with thirst and this is not a thirst that can be borne, but one which nothing will quench. . . . Though this torment and grief could not, I think, be surpassed by any earthly cross . . . , yet they appeared to her as nothing in comparison with their recompense. The soul realizes that it has not merited anguish which is of such measureless value.

In the same chapter of the sixth mansion, the saint goes on to say: "This agony does not continue for long in its full violence—never, I believe, longer than three or four hours; were it prolonged, the weakness of our nature could not endure it except by a miracle. . . . This favor entails great suffering but leaves most precious graces within the soul, which loses all fear of any crosses it may henceforth meet with, for in comparison with the acute anguish it has gone through, all else seems nothing. . . . It is also much more detached from creatures, having learned that no one but its Creator can bring it consolation and strength." [28]

[28] *Treatise on the Love of God,* Bk. VII, chap. 7.

[2*] *The Interior Castle,* sixth mansion, chap. 11, *passim.*

[25] See also St. Teresa, *Life,* chap. 29; *Relation,* 54. Cf. St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chaps. 11 ff.; *The Living Flame of Love,* st. 1, v. 2-4; st. 2, v. 1-3. Cf. also Father Gabriel of St. Magdalen, "L'École thérésienne et les blessures d'amour mystique," *Etudes carmélitaines,* October, 1936, pp. 208-42.

The spiritual wound is sometimes accompanied by a corporeal wound of the heart, which is its symbol. Cf. *infra,* the following chapter and chap. 56: "Stigmatization, suggestion, and ecstasy."

CHAPTER LU

The Transforming Union, Prelude of the Union of Heaven

WE shall now discuss the supreme development on earth of the life of grace in souls that have undergone the passive purification of the spirit, described by St. John of the Cross in *The Dark Night*[1] and by St. Teresa in *The Interior Castle*.[2]

On emerging from these interior trials, the soul receives such knowledge of the divine majesty that it is at times absorbed in God, as Archimedes was by his discoveries, to such an extent that he did not hear speech addressed to him. At other times, the soul exults and cannot refrain from singing the praises of God. In this connection St. Teresa says: "So excessive is its jubilee that the soul will not enjoy it alone, but speaks of it to all around so that they may help it to praise God, which is its one desire."[3] Thus St. Dominic spoke only to God or of God and spent his nights in prayer at the foot of the altar; St. Thomas Aquinas also prayed for hours at night before the Blessed Sacrament.

This holy joy of soul, the fruit of union with God, may be desired, says St. Teresa,[4] whereas it is in no way fitting to desire visions and revelations, for they are extraordinary favors entirely distinct from the full development of the life of grace in our souls. St. Teresa declares: "Know that for having received many favors of this kind, you will not merit more glory, but will be the more stringently obliged to serve, since you have received more. . . . There are many saints who never knew what it was to receive one such favor,

[1] Bk. II.
[2] Sixth mansion, chap. i.
[3] *Ibid.,* chap. 6.
[4] *Ibid.,* chap. 9.

while others who have received them are not saints at all. . . . Indeed, for one that is granted, the soul bears many a cross." 5

Finally, at the end of its earthly ascent toward God, the soul is introduced into the transforming union, described especially by St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, who bring a precision of statement on this point to what the greatest spiritual writers who preceded them had said. Using their description, we shall see the graces which sometimes accompany the transforming union, next the essential nature of this union, its theological explanation, and its fruits.

The Graces Which Sometimes Accompany the Transforming Union

The spiritual marriage is at times celebrated with expressive symbolism: the favored person receives a ring set with precious stones, which from then on he sees from time to time; he hears celestial canticles. This sensible symbolism is also at times accompanied by an apparition of our Lord and by an intellectual vision of the Blessed Trinity. St. Teresa mentions these two graces which she personally received.* She also notes: "Those whom our Lord admits into the seventh mansion . . . are constantly in the company of Christ our Lord both in His humanity and His divinity." †

The intellectual vision of the Blessed Trinity which certain persons receive in this state shows them by an infused idea and an eminent light the real distinction between the three Persons and the unity of Their nature incomparably better than the best theologian could by developing the congruous arguments relative to this mystery. The soul thus favored has not yet the immediate vision of the divine essence; it does not possess the intrinsic evidence of the mystery; it does not yet see that if God were not triune, He would not be God. The soul still remains in the order of faith, but its faith becomes singularly penetrating, luminous, and sweet. It grasps far better than before that the Father is God, that the Son is God, that the Holy Ghost is God, and, nevertheless, that the Father is not the Son, and that neither the Father nor the Son is the

• *Ibid.*
* Seventh mansion, chap. 2.
† Sixth mansion, chap. 7.

Holy Ghost. It sees dimly, so to speak, that the Father in His infinite fecundity communicates the entire divine nature to the Son, and the Father and the Son communicate it to the Holy Ghost by the most perfect diffusion of the divine goodness and in the most intimate communion. The soul sees in the Blessed Trinity an eminent exemplar of Eucharistic Communion and of the closest union of the soul with its Creator and Father, according to the words of Jesus: "That they may be one as We also are one."

This intellectual vision of the Blessed Trinity, which is inferior to the beatific vision, is of varying and intermittent clarity. It does not seem necessarily linked to the transforming union according to the description given of it by St. John of the Cross.[8] He does not say that this state requires essentially extraordinary graces, although it implies a very lofty contemplation of the divine perfections.

The Essential Nature of the Transforming Union

St. Teresa notes that in this stage ecstasies cease as a rule: "The infirmity [of ecstasy] formerly so troublesome to the mind and impossible to get over, disappears at once. Probably this is because our Lord has now strengthened, dilated, and developed the soul."[9] Thus union with God, which can now take place without troubling the exercise of the faculties, becomes almost continual. It seems indeed that the Blessed Virgin was always in this state, and it is also said that St. Hildegarde never knew the weakness of ecstasy.

According to St. John of the Cross,[10] the essential basis of this wholly eminent state is in no way miraculous; it is, says the saint, "the perfect state of the spiritual life," being here on earth the culminating point of the development of the life of grace and of the love of God, and the closest union with the Blessed Trinity, which dwells in every soul in the state of grace.

In the transforming union the higher faculties are drawn to the innermost center of the soul where the Blessed Trinity dwells.[11] Under this grace the soul cannot doubt the presence in it of the divine Persons and is almost never deprived of Their company.

[8] *The Living Flame,* st. 2; *A Spiritual Canticle,* Part III, st. 22 ff.
[9] Seventh mansion, chap. 3.
[10] *The Living Flame,* st. 2; *A Spiritual Canticle,* Part III, st. 22 ff.
[11] *The Living Flame, loc. cit.*

"The soul learns that it is God who gives it 'life,' by certain secret intuitions," says St. Teresa.12*

St. John of the Cross, in *The Living Flame of Love,* explains this union by several images:

> Thus fire or a stone tend by their natural force to the center of their sphere. . . . When a stone shall have reached the center of the earth, and is incapable of further motion of its own, we say of it that it is then in its inmost or deepest center.
>
> The center of the soul is God. When the soul shall have reached Him, according to its essence, and according to the power of its operations, it will then have attained to its ultimate and deepest center in God. This will be when the soul shall love Him, comprehend Him, and enjoy Him with all its strength. When, however, the soul has not attained to this state, . . . it is not in the deepest center, because there is still room for it to advance. . . . But if the soul shall have attained to the highest degree of love, the love of God will then wound it in its inmost depth or center, and the soul will be transformed and enlightened in the highest degree in its substance, faculties, and strength, until it shall become most like unto God. The soul in this state may be compared to crystal, lucid and pure; the greater the light thrown upon it, the more luminous it becomes by the concentration thereof, until at last it seems to be all light and indistinguishable from it; it being then so illumined, and to the utmost extent, that it seems to be one with the light itself.13

A little farther on, St. John of the Cross uses another image: "It is the same fire that first disposes the wood for combustion and afterward consumes it." 14 It is still wood, but incandescent wood, which has taken on the properties of fire. Thus from the purified heart a flame rises almost ceaselessly toward God.

St. Teresa uses still another figure for this spiritual state, comparing it to rain: "Thus rain which falls from heaven into a river is so mingled with it that it can no longer be distinguished from it." The figure of two candles whose flames unite to form a single flame, has also been used to describe this union, which is like a fusion of the soul's life and God's. As a result, we understand why St. John of the Cross describes the transforming union as the state of spiritual perfection, the full development of the grace of the virtues and the

12 Seventh mansion, chap. a.
13 *The Living Fla?ne,* st. 1, v. 3.
14 *Ibid.,* v. 4.

gifts: "The perfect spiritual life," he says, "consists in the possession of God by the union of love." [15]

The transforming union is, therefore, most intimate; it brings with it great, inalterable peace, at least to the summit of the higher faculties. Yet the soul thus favored may still at times be "sorrowful unto death" if Jesus wishes to associate it with His life of reparation and lead it to Gethsemane for the salvation of sinners. In the Garden of Olives, He himself had more than the transforming union; with the hypostatic union, He had the beatific vision, and yet He willed to experience mortal sadness that His holocaust might be perfect.

The Theological Explanation of This State

In *A Spiritual Canticle,* St. John of the Cross writes of the interior cellars thus: "These cellars are seven in number, and the soul has entered into them all when it has in perfection the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, so far as it is possible for it. . . . Many souls reach and enter the first cellar, each according to the perfection of its love, but the last and inmost cellar is entered by few in this world, because therein is wrought the perfect union with God, the union of the spiritual marriage." [18]

In other words, when the soul perfectly possesses the gift of wisdom, the highest of the seven gifts received in baptism with sanctifying grace, it has reached its inner sanctuary where the Blessed Trinity dwells, and union with God is no longer only habitual, but actual and in some measure transforming. In spite of the infinite distance separating the creature's being from that of the Creator, it is a union of quasi-experimental knowledge and very intimate love, in which the soul is deified by receiving perfect participation in the divine nature. In this sense, St. Paul could write: "He who is joined to the Lord, is one spirit." [17]

In this case union is transforming because the soul, while keeping its created nature, receives a great increase of sanctifying grace

[15] *Ibid.,* st. 2, v. 6. Cf. Father Gabriel of St. Magdalen, C.D., "L'union transformante selon saint Jean de la Croix," *La Vie spirituelle,* March, 1927, pp. 87 ff. G. L. Strena, "Les Sommets de la vie d'amour," *Angelicum,* January, 1937, pp. 264-80.

[18] St. 26, par. 2, 3.

[17] Cf. I Cor. 6:17.

and charity, and because it is the characteristic of ardent love to transform us morally into the person loved who is like another self, *alter ego,* for whom we wish, as we do for ourselves, all suitable goods. If this person is divine, holy souls wish Him to reign ever more profoundly in them, to be closer to them than they are to themselves, closer than the air they breathe is to their lungs, and the freshened blood to their hearts.[18]*

St. John of the Cross himself, therefore, gives the theological explanation of this state, which he sums up in a principle enunciated in the *Ascent of Mount Carmel:* "The more pure and clean the soul in the perfection of a living faith, the greater is the infusion of charity, and the greater the charity, the greater the illumination and the more abundant the graces." [10]

St. Thomas says likewise that the seven gifts are connected with charity; consequently, just as the infused virtues, they grow with it, like the parts of one and the same organism, or "like the five fingers of the hand." [20]

Evidently there are many degrees in the transforming union. St. John of the Cross points out this fact in *A Spiritual Canticle,*[21] apropos of the spiritual betrothals, in which the soul enjoys perfect union in a transitory way, whereas in the spiritual marriage the soul possesses it in a quasi-continual manner.

According to St. Teresa,[22] the fruitive union of the betrothal lasts scarcely more than half an hour, during which the soul has experimental knowledge of God really present in it and of His embrace.

In the spiritual marriage, which is ratified on earth and will be consummated in heaven, the actual union of love with God experimentally known in the center of the soul becomes more constant. According to several authors, this state is, as it were, the equivalent of a special revelation which gives the soul the certitude of being in the state of grace and, some writers add, a certitude of its pre-

[18] St. Thomas, la llae, q.28, a. i, a: Union is the effect of love, which itself consists in the union of affection, and desires real union by vision which is like the possession of the object loved. Mutual inherence is also an effect of love; for the loved one is in the lover, in his affection, and this affection inclines the lover toward the beloved.

[10] Bk. II, chap. 29; *A Spiritual Canticle,* st. 30.

[20] *Summa,* la llae, q.68, a. 5; q.66, a. 2.

[21] St. 14.

[22] *Life,* chap. 18, par. 16.

destination. This last point may be verified in many cases, but, as we shall see, it is not certain that it is verified as a rule.

St. John of the Cross says in *A Spiritual Canticle:* "We are not to suppose that all souls, thus far advanced, receive all that is here described, either in the same way or in the same degree of knowledge and of consciousness. Some souls receive more, others less; some in one way, some in another; and yet all may be in the state of spiritual betrothal." [28] Likewise, there are many degrees in the quasi-continual transforming union, under a more or less manifest form, up to the highest degree which the Blessed Virgin Mary enjoyed on earth. In these different degrees, it may be truthfully said that souls, according to their predestination, have attained here on earth their deepest center. This is the perfect realization of Christ's prayer: "That they may be one, as We also are one: I in them, and Thou in Me; . . . that the world may know that Thou . . . hast loved them, as Thou hast also loved Me." [24]

The Effects of the Transforming Union

The effects of this state of perfection are those of the theological virtues and of the gifts which have attained their full development. One of the fruits of this union is that which was granted to the apostles on Pentecost, confirmation in grace. St. John of the Cross says: "I believe that no soul ever attains to this state without being confirmed in grace." [25]

The Carmelites of Salamanca explain this confirmation in grace as a certain participation in the impeccability of the blessed through a great increase in charity whose progress turns us more and more away from sin. This notable increase of divine love is completed by a special protection of God, who removes the occasions of sin and strengthens the soul when necessary, so that it is henceforth always preserved from mortal sin and even almost always from deliberate venial sin.[20]

Is the soul that has reached this state certain of no longer offending God and of obtaining the grace of final perseverance? St. Teresa simply says that it is almost freed from the disturbance of the pas-

[24] St. 14.
John 17:22 f.
A Spiritual Canticle, st. 22.
Cf. Salmanticcnces, *De gratia,* q. 110, disp. Ill, dub. XI, no. 259.

sions, that as long as it is under the actual grace of the transforming union it does not sin venially with full deliberation. She writes: "The accustomed movements of the faculties and imagination do not appear to take place in any way that can injure the soul or disturb its peace. Do I seem to imply that after God has brought the soul thus far it is certain to be saved and cannot fall into sin again? I do not mean this; whenever I say that the soul seems in security, I must be understood to imply for as long as His Majesty thus holds it in His care and it does not offend Him." [27]

This text shows that St. Teresa is less categorical than St. John of the Cross, who goes so far as to say in *A Spiritual Canticle:* "The soul has left on one side and forgotten all temptations, trials, sorrows, anxieties, and cares." [28]

St. Teresa's manner of speaking seems more conformable to that of theology, which teaches that the grace of final perseverance cannot be merited, and that to be assured of salvation one would have to have a special revelation about one's own predestination. This last point was even defined by the Council of Trent.[29] Now we cannot affirm as certain that the transforming union implies in all its degrees and in every case the equivalent of such a revelation. Moreover, after receiving a revelation, one may, under certain temptations, doubt its divine origin.

We should not forget the unusually significant example of the great St. Paul of the Cross, founder of the Passionists, who passed through the purifying night of the spirit about the age of twenty-six, and received the grace of the transforming union at twenty-nine. Destined to reach the age of eighty-one and to found an order vowed to reparation, he lived from the time he was thirty-one until he was seventy-five in an almost continual reparatory night of the spirit, during which several times he questioned whether he would be saved.[30]

Perhaps with the reservation "under the actual grace of union," the following statement of St. John of the Cross should be understood: "Finally, all the motions and acts of the soul, proceeding from

[27] *The Interior Castle,* seventh mansion, chap. 2.
[28] St. 22.
[29] Denzinger, no. 805.
[30] Cf. Father Cajetan of the Holy Name of Mary, *Oraison et ascension mystique de saint Paul de la Croix* (Louvain, 1930), pp. 115-177. Cf. *infra,* the appendix to chap. 49.

the principle of its natural and imperfect life, are now changed in this union with God into divine motions. For the soul, as the true child of God, is moved by the Spirit of God, as it is written: 'Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God' (Rom. 8:14)." [81]

We are not ignorant of the fact that in speaking of the transforming union Philip of the Blessed Trinity [82] and Scaramelli[88] consider that so sublime a state requires that God reveal to the soul the indissoluble friendship that exists between them. According to these authors, if the person thus favored does not receive a special revelation of his predestination, there is, as it were, an equivalent of this special revelation.

We believe that it suffices to affirm that the Holy Ghost then greatly confirms the certitude of hope. This certitude is, as St. Thomas says,[84] a certitude of tending toward salvation without being as yet the certitude of salvation itself. Now the Holy Ghost confirms this security of hope by the increasingly filial and strong affection which He excites in us. Then is fully verified St. Paul's statement: "The Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God." [88]

In this state there are at times divine touches so profound that they are, the mystics say, "impressed on the substance of the soul." What is the meaning of this expression in the light of the principles of theology as St. Thomas understood them?

The divine touch is a most profound supernatural motion which acts on the very depth of the will and the intellect where these faculties take root in the substance of the soul, from which they emanate. God is closer to us than we are to ourselves, inasmuch as He immediately preserves the substance of our soul by a divine act which is the continuation of the creative act. Likewise He preserves sanctifying grace in the very essence of the soul, and at certain moments, by a special inspiration, He moves the very depths of our will and intellect from within in order to incline them toward Himself. Therein is a contact, not quantitative and spatial but supraspatial, spiritual, and absolutely immediate, of the divine essence with

[81] *The Living Flame,* st. 2, v. *6.*
[88] *Theol. myst. Proaemium,* a. 8.
[88] *Direttorio mistico,* tr. II, chap. 22, no. 258.
Summa, IIa IIae, q. 18, a. 4.
[88] Rom. 8:16.

the substance of our soul, and from this contact proceed in the depths of our higher faculties direct acts to which God alone can move us and which we would never produce without this special inspiration. The soul can act only through its faculties, that is, it can know only by its intellect, love and will only by its will; but in this case, under the divine touch, it acts by the most intimate depth of its faculties, there where they take root in the essence of the soul.

In it there is a spiritual embrace of God, which at certain moments is extremely strong. There is also at times in the depths of the higher faculties a wound of love, a delicious spiritual wound, which is occasionally accompanied, as in the stigmatics, by a painful wound of the body, in particular in the region of the heart.[88] It is God who wounds the soul while drawing it strongly to Himself and giving it a very ardent desire to see Him immediately and never again to be separated from Him. This burning desire of the beatific vision is the normal disposition to receive it without delay. A similar desire also exists in its way in the souls in purgatory when they are approaching the end of their purification.

In the epilogue to *The Interior Castle,* St. Teresa invites her sisters humbly to desire this intimate union with God, but not to wish to force their entrance into this mansion: "Therefore I advise you to use no violence if you meet with any obstacle, for that would displease Him so much that He would never give you admission to them. He dearly loves humility: if you think yourselves unworthy to enter the third mansion, He will grant you all the sooner the favor of entering the fifth. Then, if you serve Him well there and often repair to it, He will draw you into the mansion where He dwells Himself." [87]

The saint's words make clear that the state of spiritual perfection of which we are speaking is on earth the summit of the normal development of the life of grace, considered not precisely in a given

[88] Cf. *The Living Flame* (st. 2, v. 2): "God confers no favors on the body which He does not confer in the first place chiefly on the soul. In that case, the greater the joy and violence of the love which is the cause of the interior wound, the greater will be the pain of the visible wound, and as the former grows so does the latter. The reason is this: such souls as these, being already purified and strong in God, their spirit, strong and sound, delights in the strong and sweet Spirit of God, who, however, causes pain and suffering in their weak and corruptible flesh." Cf. *infra,* chap. 56, "Stigmatization."

[87] *The Interior Castle,* Epilogue.

person, but in itself. This summit should, in fact, imply this aspiration, that is, this very ardent desire for the beatific vision, which up to this stage did not exist in this degree. It is inconceivable that God should reveal Himself to souls not yet keenly desirous of possessing Him forever, of seeing Him immediately and forever. He prepares them for the immediate vision by a divine touch which has a savor of eternal life. St. John of the Cross speaks admirably of this favor, saying that divine touches are attained only by the practice of complete detachment from everything created,[38] and that by one of these touches of love the soul is rewarded for all its labors.[30]

About the wound of love, St. John of the Cross writes in *A Spiritual Canticle,* which he explains in *The Living Flame:*

> O Living Flame of Love,
> That woundest tenderly
> My soul in its inmost depth!
> As thou art no longer grievous,
> Perfect thy work, if it be thy will,
> Break the web of this sweet encounter.[40]

In other words, complete the work of our union; break the thread of my earthly existence, which is the final obstacle to my meeting with the Well-Beloved. This veil allows me to see God imperfectly, but it is still an obstacle to immediate and definitive union.

The living flame is the Holy Ghost who excites in the soul acts of love which are more meritorious than all it has elicited before it reached this state, says the saint in the explanation of this first stanza. He adds: "O how wonderful the fire of God! though so vehement and so consuming, though it can destroy a thousand worlds with more ease than material fire can destroy a single straw, it consumes not the spirit wherein it burns. . . . Thus on the day of Pentecost the fire descended with great vehemence upon the Apostles, who . . . sweetly burned interiorly." [41]

In his explanation of verse five of the second stanza of *The Living Flame,* St. John of the Cross wrote this significant passage: "Why is

·' *The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chap. 23.
·" *The Living Flame,* st. 2, v. 5.
40 Ibid., st. I.
41 Ibid., st. 2, par. 4.

it that so few ever attain to this state [of perfection and of union with God]? The reason is that in this marvelous work which God Himself begins, so many are weak, shrinking from trouble, and unwilling to endure the least discomfort or mortification, or to labor with constant patience. Hence it is that God, not finding them diligent in cultivating the graces He has given them when He began to try them, proceeds no further with their purification, neither does He lift them up out of the dust of the earth, because it required greater courage and resolution for this than they possessed. . . . They are few in number who deserve to be made perfect through sufferings so as to attain to so high a state as this." [42] The soul must pass through many tribulations to reach "the perfect spiritual life, which consists in the possession of God by the union of love." [43]

Truly spiritual delights come from the cross, from the spirit of sacrifice which puts to death all that is inordinate in us in order to assure the first place to the love of God and of souls in God.

When the heart thus burns with love for its God, the soul contemplates lamps of fire which illumine all things from above. These lamps are the divine perfections: wisdom, goodness, mercy, justice, providence, eternity, omnipotence. They are, so to speak, the colors of the divine rainbow, which are identical without destroying each other in the intimate life of God, in the Deity, as the seven colors of the earthly rainbow fuse in the white light from which they proceed. "God, therefore," says St. John of the Cross, "according to this knowledge of Him in unity, is to the soul as many lamps, because it has the knowledge of each of them [these attributes], and because they minister to it the warmth of love, each in its own way, and yet all of one subject, all one lamp." [44]

These souls are characterized by great forgetfulness of self, a great desire to suffer in imitation of the example of our Lord. The soul participates in the very strength of Christ, in His immense love for men; it succeeds in practicing simultaneously virtues that apparently are most contradictory: justice and mercy, fortitude and meekness, the simplicity of the dove and the prudence of the serpent. It unites the most sublime contemplation to the most circumspect common sense in matters of which it must judge. Thus these souls are definitively marked with the image of Christ. The apostolic life

42 *Ibid.,* st. 2, v. 5.
*' *Ibid.,* st. 2, v. 6.
44 *Ibid.,* st. 3, v. i.

(manifest or hidden) or the life of reparation overflows from the plenitude of their contemplation and union with God.[46]

Such is manifestly the perfect disposition of the truly purified soul to pass immediately at the moment of death from earth to heaven without having to go through purgatory. The perfect order is to be purified before death with merit, in order not to have to be purified after death without merit. Only in the close union we have described does the soul have an ardent desire to see God. It is inconceivable that God should show Himself immediately and forever to a soul not ardently desirous of seeing Him.

This doctrine would be too lofty for us if in baptism we had not received the life of grace, which should develop in us also into eternal life, nor often received Holy Communion, which has as its principal purpose to increase the love of God in us. Let us remember that each of our Communions should be substantially more fervent and fruitful than the preceding one. We shall then see that, as St. John of the Cross says, interior souls would reach the close union which we have just discussed if they did not flee from the trials which God sends them for their purification.[48]

In the transforming union we see the full development of grace, which is eternal life begun, *quaedam inchoatio vitae æternae.*

A Note on the Highest Degree of the Mystical Life

THE NAMELESS DEPTH OF THE SOUL AND THE DEITY

Tauler describes as follows the highest degree of the mystical life in the servants of God:

The peace of the highest degree is the essential peace of which it is written: "Seek after peace and pursue it." [1] They seek peace, and it follows them. This peace, "which surpasseth all understanding," [2] follows upon the essential conversion. When what is unnamable and unnamed in the soul turns fully toward Godr everything in man that has a name follows this unnamed depth of the soul and is likewise converted. To this

45 Cf. St. Catherine of Siena, *Dialogue* (transi. E. Cartier, Paris, 1855), II, chap. 145.

4· *The Living Flame,* st. a, v. 5.

47 What St. John of the Cross says of the transforming union in *The Living Flame* should be compared with what Tauler wrote about it. Cf. *Sermons de Tauler:* Second sermon for the Fifth Sunday after Trinity Sunday (transi. Hugueny, II, *221-26).*

>Ps. 33:15-

•Phil. 4:17.

conversion always answers that which is nameless, that which is unnamed in God and also that which in God has a name; all this answers to conversion. In such a man, God proclaims His true peace, and man can then say: "I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me; for He will speak peace unto His people . . . and unto them that are converted unto the heart." [1] Dionysius says that these men are formed in God. St. Paul must have been thinking of these men when he said: "That being rooted and founded in charity, you may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth ... of God." [2]

Do not imagine that I claim to have arrived at this degree. No master should, in truth, teach that which he himself has not experienced. Strictly speaking, it suffices that he love that of which he speaks, that he pursue it, and place no hindrance to it. . . .

Nature, which is too weak to bear such a life, must necessarily be broken, with the result that this man no longer has a single day of good health. ... As St. Paul says: "Power is made perfect in infirmity." [3] However, this weakness does not come from exterior observances, but from the superabundant outpouring of the divinity, which inundates this man to such a point that his poor body of clay cannot bear it. For God has so drawn this man into Himself that man thus becomes "deicolored," to such an extent that God Himself performs the works of this man. ... It is in such souls that God finds His glory. . . .

When they plunge into this bottomless sea, no longer do they have definite words or thoughts. ... At this time man buries himself so deeply in his unfathomable nothingness that he retains absolutely nothing for himself . . . and gives back all that he has received from God, the Author of every good. . . . There the spirit [of man] is lost in the spirit of God. . . . And yet this man becomes so profoundly human a man ... so good to all that no defect can be found in him. ... It is not to be believed that such souls may ever be separated from God. May this be the portion of all of us! May God help us to attain it! Amen. [4]

THE HOLY GHOST LIFTS UP THE SOUL AND PRAYS IN IT

In the *Sermon for the Second Sunday of Lent,* [1] Tauler also speaks of the pursuit of God:

[1] Ps. 84:9.
[2] Eph. 3:17-19.
[3] Cf. II Cor. 12:9.
[4] *Second Sermon for the Fifth Sunday after Trinity* (transi. Hugueny, II, 171 ff.).
[1] *Ibid.,* I, 241 ff.

It provokes an appealing cry of immense power. . . . It is a sigh coming from an endless depth and far exceeding nature. The Holy Ghost Himself must utter this sigh in us, as St. Paul says: "The Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings." [9] . . . When the poor man thus pursued experiences this immense anxiety and cries to God with inexpressible sighs and with such a desire that his appeal penetrates even the loftiest heavens, if God then acts as if He heard absolutely nothing or wished to know nothing, how greatly at this moment in the depths of the soul man's desire should reach out and become more urgent! . . . Then the soul, while abasing and humbling itself, should pray with confidence like the woman of Canaan: "Yea, Lord; for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters." [8] . . . These roads, and these alone, lead in truth, and without an intermediary station, even to God.[10]

In a manuscript dealing with this subject, we read:

In this immensely powerful cry of appeal there is an act of love of God which pierces the clouds, an act of love not obtained by impetuous outbursts. It is Jesus who passes by and gives rise in the soul to a movement which is extremely calm, tranquil like the peace of God, but which issues from the most profound depths of the heart, where love dwells, and goes forth and touches Jesus in the unfathomable depths of eternity. This act of love is absolutely distinct from the most fervent acts that we ourselves make. When Jesus forms it in the soul, the soul perceives it because a little of its life ascends toward God. It is not so much the Lord who, by a divine touch, reaches the depths of the soul, but rather it is the soul which, lifted up by Him, rushes rapidly toward Him, as by a flight of incomparable gentleness, by an act of love which God alone can produce in it.[11]

These acts of love are always promptly followed by crosses, by great crosses. But everything goes well in this way.

This is progressive configuration to our Lord.

DETACHMENT FROM SELF AND ATTACHMENT TO GOD

A soul that seems to be approaching this state wrote the following lines which are reminiscent of the pages we have just quoted from Tauler:

[9] Rom. 8:26.
[8] Matt. 15:17.
[10] Transi. Hugueny, I, 241 ff.
[11] This is clearly an eminent operating grace, sharply distinct from cooperating grace, as St. Thomas points out (la Ilae, q. 111, a.z). Thus is heard

In prayer I sometimes feel this tearing of myself away from myself which carries all my being into "An Other," a tearing away which is brought about without any violence, but with power and gentleness, and with the sweet and complete consent of my will; this is my part. But what is the Lord's part? . . . At the term of this movement (if I may thus express myself, for in this prayer this movement is continuous), I have felt as if two great arms entwined me; it was the Abyss which closed over and swallowed me up in its infinite depths. When a ship sinks, the waters of the sea open up to receive it, then silently close over it. This is something similar. . . .

My whole being would break its bonds and cast itself into the Other. Although often I do nothing in prayer, there is always, more or less, this secret and imperceptible movement which would draw me whither I cannot go. . . . All graces, all supernatural impulsions emanate from this innermost depth wherein God acts, and literally bear me away into this infinite abyss. It is God within me who bears me away in Himself out of myself. Sometimes I feel that the grace is not completed, that it stops at the threshold of a grace of full union. . . . Were the grace to attain its normal term each time, the result would be the embrace of two spirits in a silence like that of eternity; but I remain on the threshold.

When a grace of this kind is given to me, my active intellect and will are warned by the substance of my very soul, as, for example, when it is extremely cold, I feel the cold before thinking that the weather is cold. This physical experience precedes the judgment of the mind; similarly, the experience felt in the substance of the soul (evidently, it is from the experimental and mystical point of view and not from the philosophical point of view that I speak of the substance of the soul) precedes the idea of the gift received. Inversely, if I deliberately propose to touch an object that I know is very cold, the thought of the cold precedes the physical experience of the cold that I am about to feel. Likewise, my will and intellect can in an instant awaken the inert experience in the depths of my soul which awaits but a stimulus to be revived. When my soul is powerless and empty, I do indeed deliberately intensify my oblation, and this act provokes at long intervals as it were an awakening.

DIFFERENT MEANINGS OF THE TITLE "SPOUSE"

In view of certain observations that have been made to us, we believe it advisable in a discussion of the transforming union to signalize the following points.

Some very loving, greatly tried, and extremely generous souls

and granted the prayer! 'Take me from myself, Lord, and give me completely to Thyself."

live closely united to God in the world, and their director may early believe that they have entered the transforming union. This judgment may, however, be precipitate, for, before attaining to the spiritual marriage, the chosen soul must first become a spouse, as a simple religious is who has made profession after the trials and generous acts of the novitiate.

There may be a notable error of interpretation in this decision if the director or the directed soul attributes to the title of spouse, received occasionally in an interior locution, the same meaning as that of the far superior title of spouse in the transforming union. There is a great difference between the term spouse, used to denote a religious who has made profession, and the title spouse, as applied to St. Catherine of Siena and St. Teresa. Moreover, even in the second sense, the perfect soul, though confirmed in grace, may not believe that it has attained the goal, for until its last sigh it will remain on the royal road, seeing this goal in a very consoling light, while recalling the words of St. Paul: "Not as though I had already attained or were already perfect; but I follow after." [12]

Again, a soul much loved by God is drawn to Him, and gives itself. It is very generous, wholly loving, pure, and its crosses become heavy. After an interior locution, the Lord seems to choose it as a spouse. May this soul believe that it is in the transforming union? Is this not simply the normal state of a good religious after profession? For this chosen soul still has numerous defects and imperfections, which seem incompatible with the spiritual marriage. But the director may believe that this soul will attain to this state when its charity is wholly true and its life completely impregnated with God.

The life of St. Gemma Galgani, for example, shows clearly what the Lord required of her before permitting her to call herself His spouse. This valiant saint, who never refused anything to grace, complained at times of these demands.

Another case is that of a married woman, who is partly emancipated from what has become for her humiliating servitude and who is generous in her sacrifices. Our Lord holds her soul captive and urges her to belong to Him alone. As a result she is somewhat inclined to believe that she is in the transforming union. In our opinion she is accepted as a spouse in the sense that a religious is after final profession, and we believe that if the mystical marriage is

11 Phil, jh i.

granted to this person, it will be only later on, for this beautiful soul is still too much encumbered with herself. All worldly nets are not odious to her. Her charity does not at all measure up to that of a soul united to God by the spiritual marriage. More profound trials will perhaps not delay in making this evident.

The transforming union is, undoubtedly, given in different degrees, but the least degree requires perfect charity toward God and one's neighbor. Who can tell it without having attained to that state where there is no longer any insufficiency, where an unknown food is served to the well-beloved who, filled but still famished, utter ineffable groans?

THE DESIRE OF THE TRANSFORMING UNION

May a generous person, who truly seems to have passed through at least a part of the night of the spirit, desire and ask for the grace of the transforming union?

Certainly. This grace is here on earth the term of the more or less conscious aspirations of such a soul. If an explicit desire is in question, however, it is advisable to give it a more objective expression, that is, desiring the ever more profound reign of God in our souls and their more perfect configuration to our Lord. Besides, it is also advisable to keep in mind what St. Teresa points out in the epilogue to *The Interior Castle:* "It is true you cannot enter all the mansions by your own power, however great it may appear to you, unless the Lord of the castle Himself admits you. Therefore I advise you to use no violence if you meet with any obstacle, for that would displease Him so much that He would never give you admission to them. He dearly loves humility: if you think yourselves unworthy to enter the third mansion, He will grant you all the sooner the favor of entering the fifth. Then, if you serve Him well there and often repair to it, He will draw you into the mansion where He dwells Himself. . . . When once you have learned how to enjoy this castle, you will always find rest, however painful your trials may be, in the hope of returning to your Lord, which no one can prevent."

Let us also remember what St. John of the Cross says in *The Living Flame:* "O souls that seek your own ease and comfort, if you knew how necessary for this high state is suffering, and how profitable suffering and mortification are for attaining to these great bless-

ings." [13] He likewise writes in *A Spiritual Canticle:* "O that men would understand how impossible it is to enter the thicket, the manifold riches of the wisdom of God, without entering into the thicket of manifold suffering making it the desire and consolation of the soul; and how that the soul which really longs for the divine wisdom, longs first of all for the sufferings of the cross, that it may enter in. . . . They who desire to enter in that way are few, while those who desire the joys that come by it are many." [14]

In the following stanza, St. John of the Cross says: "One of the reasons which most influence the soul to enter into the 'thicket' of the wisdom of God, and to have a more intimate knowledge of the beauty of the divine wisdom, is, as I have said, that it may unite the understanding with God in the knowledge of the mysteries of the Incarnation, as of all His works the highest and most full of sweetness, and the most delicious knowledge. . . . But the soul cannot reach these hidden treasures unless it first passes through the thicket of interior and exterior suffering." [15]

Certainly this end, the prelude of heaven, is highly desirable; but the soul must be willing to take the royal road which leads to it.[18]

" St. 2, v. 5.

[14] St. 36, v. 5.

[15] St. 37, v. i f. This passage and the preceding one are almost the same in the two editions of *A Spiritual Canticle,* although the numbering of the stanzas is not identical. The stanza, numbered thirty-five in one is number thirty-six in the other. We are inclined to believe, as Father Gabriel of St. Magdalen does *(Angelicum,* 1937, fasc. 1-2, p. 264), that these two editions of *A Spiritual Canticle* are the work of St. John of the Cross. In die second, the saint denies nothing of what he said in the first, but his thought is more precise; it shows more clearly that the plenitude attained by the transforming union on earth is still only relative, and he compares it more with that of the union of heaven.

On the desire of the transforming union in the soul undergoing the night of the spirit, see *A Spiritual Canticle* (2nd ed.; st. 37, v. 3, par. 5): "The soul longs to enter in earnest into these caverns of Christ, that it may be absorbed, transformed, and inebriated in the love and knowledge of His mysteries, hiding itself in the bosom of the Beloved. It is into these caverns that, in the Canticle of Canticles (2:13 f.), He invites the bride to enter, saying: 'Arise, My love. My beautiful one, and come; My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall.' These clefts of the rock are the caverns of which we arc here speaking, and to which the bride refers, saying: 'And there we shall enter in.' . . . To say 'we shall enter,' is as much as to say, 'there shall we transform ourselves,' that is, 'I shall be transformed in Thee through the love of Thy divine and sweet judgments.' "

[14] Cf. the text from *A Spiritual Canticle* quoted at the end of this appendix.

THE INTIMACY OF THE TRANSFORMING UNION

The intimacy of the transforming union, it should be noted, is due to an absolutely eminent operating grace. Of operating grace in general, in contradistinction to cooperating grace, St. Thomas says: "The operation of an affect is not attributed to the thing moved but to the mover. Hence in that effect in which our mind is moved and does not move, but in which God is the sole mover, the operation is attributed to God, and it is with reference to this that we speak of operating grace." [17] The will, however, freely consents to be moved.

The human will indubitably continues to exist, since it will subsist even in beatific love; it is not physically absorbed in God, as the pantheists would say in this case. We must hold what St. John of the Cross so well expresses in *A Spiritual Canticle:* "Though in heaven the will of the soul is not destroyed, it is so intimately united with the power of the will of God, who loves it, that it loves Him as strongly and as perfectly as it is loved by Him. . . . Thus the soul loves God with the will and strength of God Himself, being made one with that very strength of love wherewith itself is loved by God. This strength is of the Holy Ghost, in whom the soul is there transformed. He is given to the soul to strengthen its love; ministering to it, and supplying in it, because of its transformation in glory, that which is defective in it." [18]

THE EQUALITY OF LOVE

Consequently, as Father Gabriel of St. Magdalen [19] well explains, one can understand that the soul reaches a certain equality of love with God. St. John says in *The Living Flame:*

Thus, then, the soul, by reason of its transformation, being a shadow of God, effects through God in God what He effects within it Himself by Himself, because the will of both is one. And as God is giving Himself with a free and gracious will, so the soul also with a will, the more free and the more generous the more it is united with God in God, is, as it were, giving back to God—in that loving complacency with which it regards the divine essence and perfections—God Himself. . . . The soul gives to the Beloved, who is God Himself, what He had given to it.

lr Summa, la Ilae, q. in, a.z.
*·. Second edition (1909), st. 38, par. 3 f.
*·. *Art. cit., Angelicum,* 1937, p. 275.

Herein it pays the whole debt, for the soul gives as much voluntarily with inestimable joy and delight, giving the Holy Spirit as its own of its own free will, so that God may be loved as He deserves to be. Herein consists the inestimable joy of the soul, for it sees that it offers to God what becomes Him in His infinite Being.[20]

This is truly the prelude of the life of heaven.

CONCLUSION

Whence *A Spiritual Canticle* concludes: "O souls created for this [such grandeurs] and called thereto, what are you doing? What are your occupations? Your aim is meanness, and your enjoyments misery. Oh, wretched blindness of the children of Adam, blind to so great a light and deaf to so clear a voice!" [21]

As Father Gabriel of St. Magdalen says: "This call, addressed by the saint to souls in general, shows us that he cannot regard as 'extraordinary' the sublime things he has just described for us. . . . That state, the flowering of the seed of supernatural life, which is sanctifying grace in the soul, should be within the reach of all those who are endowed with this grace." [22]

APPENDIX

The Perfection of Love and the Mystical Union or The Mysticism of *A Spiritual Canticle* by St. John of the Cross [1]

We reproduce here an article which appeared in *La Vie spirituelle* (January, 1936). We thank its author for permitting us to use it and also for having so well expressed what in our opinion is the true teaching of St. John of the Cross on several points of great importance.

I. THE PERFECTION OF LOVE AND INFUSED CONTEMPLATION

It has recently been affirmed that according to the spiritual teaching of Carmel, and of St. Teresa in particular, the perfection of

20 St. 3, par. 89-91.
21 St. 39, par. 8.
22 *Art. cit.,* p. 278.
1 By Father Alexander Rozwadowski, S.J.

love is found in the ascetical way and that infused contemplation is not at all necessary to sanctity.[2]*

God willingly grants these mystical graces to generous souls, they say. Consequently the soul does well to desire them, to prepare itself for them, and to tend to them, even to direct its whole life toward the contemplative ideal; nevertheless, they add, the fact remains that sanctity can be attained without them.

Moreover, they distinguish two kinds of contemplation: acquired contemplation and infused contemplation. The first may also be called mixed or active-passive contemplation; it is a latent mystical contemplation. They concede that this contemplation is in the normal way of sanctity. The second, mystical contemplation properly so called, experimentally passive or infused, especially in its higher degrees (the betrothal and the spiritual marriage), is not, they maintain, in the normal way.[3]

This opinion, it seems to us, is not in harmony with the teaching of St. John of the Cross.[4]*

To affirm on the one hand that mystical contemplation is not necessary to perfection, and to maintain on the other that it is good to tend to it seems to us difficult to reconcile with the teaching of the Mystical Doctor. We know with what insistence he requires that the soul absolutely divest itself of all that is accidental, acces-

2 We take the word "ascetical" in its ordinary meaning, to characterize acts that can be produced by our personal activity aided by common grace. In these acts the soul is active rather than passive. On the other hand, we use the term "mystical" to characterize acts that cannot be produced by our personal activity aided by common grace, but that require a special inspiration and illumination of the Holy Ghost. In these acts the soul is passive rather than active: *patiens divina,* as St. Thomas says, using the expression of Dionysius. Such are the acts of infused contemplation. This terminology is conformable to the usage common and proper to classical authors.

3 Cf. Father Gabriel of St. Magdalen, "La Mlstica Teresiana," *Vita Cristiana,* Florence, 1934. Father Gabriel of St. Magdalen, however, comes far nearer to our way of looking at the matter in a more recent book: S. *Giovanni della Croce, Dottore dell' Amore divino,* Florence, 1936. See also the note at the end of this appendix.

4 We believe that there is no essential divergence on this point between the teaching of St. Teresa and that of St. John of the Cross. The opinion stated in the text does not seem to us conformable either to the teaching of the great Teresa. The thesis that the doctrine of St. Teresa on the normal character of the mystical life does not differ essentially from that of St. John of the Cross is upheld and solidly proved by Arintero, Garate, Garrigou-Lagrange, Lamballe, Saudreau, and others. Cf. the works of these authors.

sory, extraordinary, and not essential or necessary to perfection.® For St. John of the Cross the unique goal in this life is perfect union with God through the theological virtues; everything that is not necessary to this union—even graces in other regards precious—is, as soon as one dwells excessively on it, an obstacle. These things must be renounced, rejected, as far as possible; the soul must go beyond them and thus rest in emptiness, in the most absolute nudity of spirit. This is the very essence of the teaching of St. John of the Cross in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* and in *The Dark Night.*® How, therefore, can we harmonize this doctrine of the void, excluding all that is accidental, with the seeking after a mystical contemplation that would be precisely something accidental?

This mortification of every desire, with the exception of that of divine union, this divesting oneself of all that is not God, constitutes for the soul the dark night, which is at the center of the saint's doctrine. If he leads the soul by this night to mystical, obscure, and general contemplation,7 is it not that, in his opinion, this contemplation is part of the perfect union to which the denudation of the purifications tends, and that there is a necessary connection between perfect love, the fruit of denudation and of the purifications, and the mystical contemplation to which the soul has access through the dark night?

This is especially clear in *A Spiritual Canticle,* and we should like to show it. Our fundamental reason is summed up in the following argument.

The transforming union described in *A Spiritual Canticle* is certainly a very lofty mystical state; no one can deny it. Now this state is in the normal way of sanctity, since St. John calls it the union of love, the state of perfection, full union with God, full and perfect love.8 Therefore even the most elevated mystical state, at least in its essential character, is in the normal way of sanctity.

Besides it would be difficult to comprehend how the perfection of love described by the saint in *A Spiritual Canticle,* could be attained without the help of mystical graces and of infused contemplation. We shall see this by an analysis of *A Spirittial Canticle.*

• Cf. *The Ascent,* II, chaps, 20, *22,* 27.
• Cf. *The Ascent,* I, chaps. 1-5; II, chaps. 1-8.
7 *Ibid.,* II, chap. 9; *A Spiritual Canticle,* st. 38.
A Spiritual Canticle, st. 15, 17, 18-20, 27, 29, 31, 34, 37-39.

To the above we add a further consideration. If the connection between the state of perfect love and the mystical state of the betrothal or of the spiritual marriage were only accidental, St. John of the Cross would at each step have caused an unbelievable confusion by continually uniting them, without ever warning us that one can exist without the other. He affirms explicitly, on the contrary, that consummate perfection is obtained only in the state of the espousals and of spiritual marriage and that before this state is reached love is always imperfect. This is what we shall try to establish by evidence.[8]

We shall show, first of all, that the union described in *A Spiritual Canticle* is the highest mystical state. By analysis of the text we shall then establish that this union is in the normal line of the development of perfect charity, the necessary term of sanctity.

ii. the union described in *A Spiritual Canticle* is mystical

First of all, we can easily establish that the union described in *A Spiritual Canticle* is the highest mystical union.

1) St. John calls this union the spiritual espousals, in its lower degree,[10]*and, in its higher degree, the spiritual marriage.[11] Now, these expressions are commonly attributed to the mystical union; marriage denotes the most sublime union; the espousals refer to the union which immediately precedes the spiritual marriage. The union to which St. John of the Cross leads the soul is, therefore, the highest mystical union.

2) St. John of the Cross calls this union the transforming union, the transformation of the soul in God,[12] and these expressions, like that of the spiritual marriage, fittingly designate the highest mystical union.

3) The Mystical Doctor attributes to the espousals the entrance into the "sweet science" that God teaches to the soul in this union;

[8] Our demonstration, as is evident, is completely independent of the lively debated question regarding the frontier between asceticism and mysticism. Our proof prescinds from this controversy. As our point of departure we take the states of the espousals and of the spiritual marriage; they are not states of transition, they are incontestably at the summit of mysticism.

[10] Cf. st. ij, 15, 18, 19, 27.

[11] Cf.st. 17,27-29, 34.3<5,37·

[12] Cf. st. 17, 27, 29, 36–38.

and "this science is mystical theology, which is the secret science of God, and which spiritual men call contemplation." [13] Evidently mystical contemplation is meant. It is God who "bestows on the soul this science and knowledge in the love by which He communicates Himself to the soul." [14] In this luminous union God transforms the soul, "makes it completely His own and empties it of all that is alien to Himself," [15] which cannot be done without the mystical graces.

In the higher degree of union we find infused contemplation more clearly described: "When the soul has been raised to the high state of spiritual marriage, the Bridegroom reveals to it, as His faithful consort, His own marvelous secrets most readily and most frequently, for he who truly and sincerely loves hides nothing from the object of his affections. The chief matter of His communications are the sweet mysteries of His Incarnation, the ways and means of the redemption, which is one of the highest works of God, and so is to the soul one of the sweetest." [16] The Bridegroom does all this in this stanza which emphasizes with what tender love He discloses such mysteries interiorly to the soul.

The state which St. John of the Cross describes here is a state of love linked to a state of infused contemplation. The connection is owing to a necessity of love: "True and full love cannot hide anything." This connection is not accidental, since this need is connatural to perfect charity. The observation is important.

4) The Mystical Doctor repeatedly affirms that it is God alone who acts and operates immediately in the soul in this state, that therein the soul passively receives contemplation.[17] But passivity characterizes precisely mystical contemplation.

5) Lastly, St. John of the Cross speaks of divine touches, of the contact of the divinity as characteristic of this union, as ordinarily produced in this state.[18] These are, certainly, very lofty mystical graces.

There is not, it seems, any doubt that the union described in *A*

[13] *A Spiritual Canticle,* st. 27, 3.
[14] *Ibid.,* 27, 3.
[14] *Ibid.,* 27, 4.
[14] *Ibid.,* st. 22, note.
[17] Cf. st. 13, 34, 38.
[14] Cf. st. 13, 14, 16, 32, 38.

Spiritual Canticle is the most distinctly characterized and the loftiest mystical union.[19]

This union is in the normal way. St. John of the Cross again and again describes the state to which the soul should tend: the spiritual marriage as full union with God, as consummated union, as the state of perfect love. He affirms that the full perfection of love is obtained only in the spiritual marriage.[20]

But full union with God, consummated perfection, perfect love are certainly in the normal way: this is the whole end of our life.[21] It will suffice, therefore, to establish solidly that, in the opinion of the Mystical Doctor, the spiritual espousals, the spiritual marriage are simply the state of perfect love in order to conclude that he places them in the normal way of sanctity. The texts will furnish us abundant proof of this.

III. THE PERFECTION OF LOVE IN THE SPIRITUAL ESPOUSALS

St. 14. The Flight of Mystical Contemplation and the State of Union

In the thirteenth stanza St. John of the Cross describes the flight of the soul in this state of ardent love and great desires, which he set forth in the first stanzas.

In the fourteenth stanza he continues: "This spiritual flight signifies a certain high estate and union of love, whereunto, after many spiritual exercises, God is wont to elevate the soul: it is called the spiritual betrothal of the Word, the Son of God." [22]

Here we have two very important affirmations: (1) the state of the spiritual espousals is nothing other than the state of union of love; (2) God is wont to elevate the soul to this state when it has greatly exercised itself in the spiritual life; which is equivalent to saying that this state is normal.

19 In describing, with St. John of the Cross, the espousals and the spiritual marriage as forms of perfect charity, we shall again have occasion to point out the mystical character of these states.

20 What we say of the spiritual marriage corresponds also, due proportion being kept, to the spiritual espousals which precede it.

21 St. Thomas, Ila llae, q. 184, a. 1, 3.

22 *A Spiritual Canticle,* st. 14.

St. 24. The State of the Spiritual Espousals, the State of Perfect Love

St. John describes the state of the spiritual espousals as the state of perfect love and of perfect and heroic virtues. The soul says clearly that it is now united to the Beloved, since it has the solid virtues together with perfect charity. Therefore it calls this union of love a bed of flowers.[23] Moreover, the soul says that the bed is of flowers because in this state the virtues in the soul are perfect and heroic, a condition impossible before there was a bed of flowers, the fruit of perfect union with God.

Perfect and heroic virtues cannot, therefore, exist before the union of the spiritual espousals; such virtues are the fruit of this union. Similarly, each of the virtues (the soul now possesses them in perfection) becomes like a den of lions. "The soul's bed is encompassed by these dens of the virtues, because in this state its virtues are so perfectly ordered, and so joined together and bound up with one another in the consummate perfection of the soul, each supporting the other, that no part of it is weak or exposed. Not only is Satan unable to penetrate within it, but even worldly things, whether great or little, fail to disturb or annoy it, or even move it; for being now free from all molestation of natural affections, and a stranger to the worry of temporal anxieties, it enjoys in security and peace the participation of God." [24]

It is clear that for St. John the state of the spiritual espousals is the initial stage of the state of consummate perfection.

St. 26. The Inner Cellar and the Union of Most Intimate Love

St. John of the Cross describes here the state of the espousals and of the spiritual marriage as full union with God and as the supreme degree of love to which the soul can attain in this life. The soul sets forth in this stanza the very great grace that God gave it by making it enter the secret depths of His love which is the union or transformation of love in God. The cellar of which the soul speaks is the supreme degree of the most intimate love to which the soul can attain in this life; consequently the soul calls it the inner cellar,

[23] St. 24, par. 2, 3.
[24] *Ibid.,* par. 6.

that is, the most secret. It uses this term because there are others less interior: such are the degrees of love through which the soul ascends to the highest. We may say that there are seven of these cellars. The soul will enter them all when it has in perfection the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. In the inmost cellar is wrought the perfect union with God, the union of the spiritual marriage, of which the soul is now speaking.[25]

Thus for St. John of the Cross the spiritual marriage is identified with full union with God. The effects of this union are then described: "Until the soul reaches the state of perfection, however spiritual it may be, there always remains a troop of desires, likings, and other imperfections, sometimes natural, sometimes spiritual, after which it runs, and which it tries to feed while following and satisfying them. . . . As to this flock, some men are more influenced by it than others; they run after and follow it, until they enter the inner cellar, where they lose it altogether, being then transformed in love. In this cellar the flock of imperfections is easily destroyed, as rust and mould on metal in the fire." [26]

It is evident that in the opinion of St. John of the Cross the highest degree of love and perfection is attained only in the state of the espousals and the spiritual marriage, in the "inner cellar." Hence no one can say that the highest degree of love is outside the normal way of the saints.

St. 17. The State of the Spiritual Espousals and the Complete Impulsion of the Soul toward God

In this stanza St. John describes the state of the spiritual espousals as the state of perfect love, in which even the first movements of the will and the sensible appetites are directed toward God. It would be futile to wish to obtain such perfection actively by one's own efforts in the purely ascetical life. And besides, St. John teaches explicitly that it is God Himself who causes this perfection in the

[25] *A Spiritual Canticle,* st. *16,* par. 2, 3. It is love that opens the way into each cellar, and the soul advances therein according to its degree of love. St. John of the Cross says: "Many souls reach and enter the first cellar, each according to the perfection of its love, but the last and inmost cellar is entered by few in this world." The reason for this is that few souls attain on earth the final perfection of love possible in this world. It is not, however, that we are not all called to it, since the perfection of charity is the very goal of our whole life.

[26] *Ibid.,* par. 20, 21.

soul by means of "mystical theology," that is, by infused contemplation. St. John states that the "science full of sweetness" which God has taught the soul is mystical theology, "which is the secret science of God, and which spiritual men call contemplation. . . . God is the Author of this union, and of the purity and perfection requisite for it; and as the transformation of the soul in Himself makes it His, He empties it of all that is alien to Himself. Thus it comes to pass that, not in will only, but in act as well, the whole soul is entirely given to God without any reserve whatever, as God has given Himself freely unto it. . . . The soul is, as it were, absorbed in God, and even its first movements have nothing in them—so far as it can comprehend them—which is at variance with the will of God. . . . The first movements (in the understanding, the memory, the will, and the desires) of the soul which has attained to the spiritual state of which I am speaking are ordinarily directed to God, because of the great help and courage it derives from Him, and its perfect conversion to goodness."

Evidently this degree of perfection is superior to human efforts; it can be attained only in the mystical way. On the other hand, it is the effect of a "union by exchange" which is in the normal development of charity.

St. 28. The Spiritual Espousals and the Activity of Love

St. John here describes the state of the spiritual espousals as the state of perfect love, in which all the higher and lower powers "are consecrated no longer to its own interests, but to those pertaining to the service of the Bridegroom." The saint says: "Even its communion with God Himself is nothing else but acts of love." The soul declares: "My soul is occupied, and all my substance in His service." In these words it reveals the gift it has made of itself to the Beloved in this union of love in which the soul is, with all its powers (intellect, will, and memory), dedicated and engaged in His service, devoting its intellect to the understanding of what is of most consequence to His cause that it may put it into practice; its will to the preference of all that gives pleasure to God, to the direction of its affections in everything to God; its memory to the seeking of what may serve Him and give Him the greatest pleasure.

The soul continues: "And all my substance in His service." By

all its substance, the soul means here all that relates to its sensible part. The soul says here that it has consecrated its sensible as well as its rational and spiritual part to His service.

All this, it says, is consecrated to His cause: the soul orders the body according to God "in all its interior and exterior senses, ail the acts of which are directed to God. The four passions of the soul are also under control in Him; for the soul's joy, hope, fear, and grief are conversant with God only; all its appetites and all its anxieties also are directed unto Him only."

"The whole substance of the soul is now so occupied with God, so intent upon Him, that its very first movements, even inadvertently, have God for their object and their end. The understanding, memory, and will tend directly to God."

"Now I guard no flock." By these words the soul means: "I do not now go after my likings and desires; for having them fixed upon God, I no longer feed or guard them. The soul not only does not guard them now, but has no other occupation than to wait upon God. 'Nor have I any other employment.' Before the soul succeeded in effecting this gift and surrender of itself, and of all that belongs to it, to the Beloved, it was entangled in many unprofitable occupations. . . . It may be said that its occupations of this kind were as many as its habits of imperfection."

The soul still has a blemish, which it never rids itself of as long as it does not once and for all consecrate all its substance to the service of God so that, as we have said, all its words, thoughts, and works are directed to God.

" 'My sole occupation is love.' The soul means: 'All my occupation now is the practice of the love of God, all the powers of soul and body, memory, understanding, and will, interior and exterior senses, the desires of spirit and of sense, all work in and by love. All I do is done in love; all I suffer, I suffer in the sweetness of love.' . . .

"When the soul has arrived at this state all the acts of its spiritual and sensual nature, whether active or passive, and of whatever kind they may be, always occasion an increase of love and delight in God; even the act of prayer and communion with God, which was formerly carried on by reflections and divers other methods, is now wholly an act of love. . . . The soul, in the state of spiritual be-

trothal, is for the most part living in the union of love—that is, the will is habitually waiting lovingly on God."

It is impossible to conceive of such perfection of love, of such a gift of self extending even to the first movements of all the powers, in the purely ascetical way. According to St. John of the Cross, this perfection, obtained only in the spiritual espousals, is the effect of the mystical graces bestowed in this state.[27]

Thus once more the state of perfect love is identified in the teaching of St. John of the Cross with the state of the spiritual espousals.

St. 29. The Soul Lost to the World for Its Beloved

This stanza also refers to the state of the spiritual espousals: "Having attained to a living love of God [that is, practicing the virtues solely for love of God], it makes little account of all this; and that is not all. It boasts that . . . it is lost to the world and to itself for the Beloved. . . . Such is he that loves God; he seeks neither gain nor reward but only to lose all, even himself, according to God's will; this is what such a one counts gain."

This is still another description of perfect love; it is the way of pure faith and pure love, as the following words show: "When a soul has advanced so far on the spiritual road as to be lost to all the natural methods of communing with God; when it seeks Him no longer by meditation, images, impressions, nor by any other created ways, or representations of sense, but only by rising above them all, in the joyful communion with Him by faith and love, then it may be said to have found God of a truth, because it has truly lost itself as to all that is not God, and also as to its own self."

IV. THE PERFECTION OF LOVE IN THE SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE

St. 12. The Spiritual Marriage and the Transforming Union

In this stanza St. John himself declares that he is discussing the spiritual marriage. First of all, he tells us that the perfection of this state is not obtained by our own efforts, but by the breathing of the Holy Ghost: that is, it belongs, not to the ascetical, but to the mystical way. The soul has again implored and obtained the breathing of

[27] Cf. st. 15, 17, 18,27,34.

the Holy Ghost which remains the indispensable means and instrument of the perfection of this state.

St. John then describes the spiritual marriage as the state of perfect love. It is a complete transformation into the Beloved: God and the soul give each other total possession of each other by the union of love consummated in the measure possible on earth. The soul as a result becomes divine and God by participation, as much as this life permits. By the consummation of the spiritual marriage between God and the soul, two natures are in one single spirit and love of God. The spouse is introduced, that is, she has got rid of all that is temporal, all that is natural, of all attachments, ways, and spiritual manners . . . in the transformation of this sublime embrace. . . . The soul is transformed in its God. The transformation is complete. What St. Paul says to the Galatians may be applied to it: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me." [28]

Thus the spiritual marriage is for St. John of the Cross the union of perfect love. But perfect love is in the normal way; all are called to perfect love, the final end of life on earth: "Now the end of the commandment is charity." [29]

Besides, St. John of the Cross affirms it: "In all the works of the soul, God and the soul have only one ambition, one end: the consummation and plenitude of this state." If, therefore, the state of spiritual marriage is the end of all the actions of the soul, as well as of the divine operation, it is necessarily identified with perfect love and cannot be in purely accidental relation to it. Consequently we conclude that it incontestably brings the spiritual marriage, an eminently mystical state, into the normal way of sanctity. The analysis of the following stanzas will but strengthen this conclusion.

St. 20-21. The Spiritual Marriage and the Total Death of the Passions

In this stanza St. John describes the spiritual marriage as the state of perfect love in which God "commands all vain distractions of the fancy and imagination from henceforth to cease, and controls the irascible and concupiscible faculties which were hitherto

[28] Gal. 2:20.

[29] Cf. I Tim. 1:5. See also St. Thomas, IIa IIae, q. 184, a. 1, 3. Pius XI, Encyclical *Rerum omnium perturbationem,* January 26, 1923, and Encyclical *Studiorum ducem,* June 29, 1923.

the sources of so much affliction. He brings, so far as it is possible in this life, the three powers of memory, understanding, and will to the perfection of their objects. . . . He adjures also all these actions which depart from the true mean, and bids them cease before the soft lyres and the siren strains, which so effectually charm the powers of the soul as to occupy them completely in their true and proper functions, so that they avoid not only all extremes, but also the slightest tendency to them."

This is a new degree of love which manifestly surpasses our own efforts and the purely ascetical life. Moreover, St. John of the Cross says so explicitly: "The Beloved adjures the affections of these four passions, compels them to cease and to be at rest."

St. 18. The Perfect Calm of the Powers and Senses

The spiritual marriage is represented here as the state of perfection which excludes even the imperfection of the inordinate first movements of the powers and senses. "And touch not our thresholds, that is to say: Let not even your first movements touch the higher part, for the first movements of the soul are the entrance and thresholds of it. When the first movements have passed into the reason, they have crossed the threshold; but when they remain as first movements only, they are then said merely to touch the threshold, or to cry at the gate, which is the case when reason and sense contend over an unreasonable act."

Thus, in this state, this sensible part with all its powers, its energies, and its weaknesses has yielded to the spirit. This constitutes even now a blessed life, similar to that of the state of innocence, when all the resources and capacities of the sensible part of man enabled him to know and to love God.

St. 35. The Solitude of the Soul with the Bridegroom

In this stanza St. John shows clearly that the spiritual marriage is a mystical state and that perfect love is not obtained in the ascetical way, but that it is God who produces it in the soul in the mystical way. In this stanza the Bridegroom declares not only that He guides the soul, "but that He is its only guide, without any intermediate help."

" 'Alone hath the Beloved guided her.' That is, the Beloved not only guides the soul in its solitude, but it is He alone who works in

it directly and immediately. It is of the nature of the soul's union with God in the spiritual marriage that God works directly, and communicates Himself immediately, not by the ministry of angels or by the help of natural capacities. For the exterior and interior senses, all created things, and even the soul itself, contribute very little toward the reception of those great supernatural favors which God bestows in this state; yea, rather, inasmuch as they do not fall within the cognizance of natural efforts, ability, and application, God effects them alone.

"The reason is that He finds the soul alone in its solitude, and therefore will not give it another companion, nor will He entrust His work to any other than Himself. There is a certain fitness in this; for the soul having abandoned all things, and passed through all the ordinary means, rising above them unto God, God Himself becomes the guide and the way to Himself. The soul in solitude, detached from all things, having now ascended above all things, nothing now can profit or help it to ascend higher except the Bridegroom Word Himself."

In this stanza St. John admirably distinguishes betwen the ascetical and the mystical ways. To the ascetical way belongs the preparation of the soul for the divine operation by denuding it of all that is created; to the mystical, consummate perfection, which God produces in the soul.

St. 37-38. Perfect Purity and Equality of Love

St. John of the Cross shows first in this stanza that the soul desires mystical contemplation, designated here by "the caverns of the rock," because mystical contemplation is the means to obtain perfect love and perfect purity. In the following stanza he describes perfection and the purity of the state of the spiritual marriage. "The reason why the soul longed to enter the caverns was that it might attain to the consummation of the love of God, the object of its continual desires; that is, that it might love God with the pureness and perfection wherewith He has loved it, so that it might thereby requite His love."

If the connection between perfect love and the mystical contemplation designated by the "caverns of the rock" were purely accidental, if perfect love and perfect purity could be obtained without mystical contemplation, this desire of the soul would be

imperfect, according to the principles of St. John of the Cross.

He continues: "In the present stanza the bride says to the Bridegroom that He will there show her what she had always aimed at in all her actions, namely, that He would show her how to love Him perfectly, as He has loved her. And, secondly, that He will give her that essential glory for which He has predestined her from the day of His eternity.

'There Thou wilt show me
That which my soul desired.'

"That which the soul aims at is equality in love with God, the object of its natural and supernatural desire. He who loves cannot be satisfied if he does not feel that he loves as much as he is loved."

The desire for equality of love is, therefore, essential to love; it is in the nature and the grace of love. The saint continues: "When the soul sees that in the transformation in God, such as is possible in this life, notwithstanding the immensity of its love, it cannot equal the perfection of that love wherewith God loves it, it desires the clear transformation of glory wherein it shall equal the perfection of love wherewith it is itself beloved of God; it desires . . . the clear transformation of glory wherein it shall equal His love. . . .

"The will of the soul will then be the will of God. . . . Though in heaven the will of the soul is not destroyed, it is so intimately united with the power of the will of God, who loves it, that it loves Him as strongly and as perfectly as it is loved of Him; both wills being united in one sole will and one sole love of God. Thus the soul loves God with the will and strength of God Himself, being made one with that very strength of love wherewith itself is loved of God. This strength is of the Holy Ghost, in whom the soul is there transformed. He is given to the soul to strengthen its love; ministering to it, and supplying in it, because of its transformation in glory, that which is defective in it. In the perfect transformation also of the state of spiritual marriage, such as is possible on earth, in which the soul is all clothed in grace, the soul loves in a certain way in the Holy Ghost, who is given to it in that transformation."

Again St. John identifies the state of the spiritual marriage with the state of perfect love, of perfect conformity to the will of God; it is the normal end of all life on earth. He then explains the purity

of this state, saying that it presupposes evidently that God has given to the soul in this state of transformation a great purity, like to that of original justice or that of baptismal innocence.[30] The soul here adds, therefore, that this purity is going to be granted to it by the Spouse as the fruit of this transformation of love. It says also:

> "And there Thou wilt give me at once,
> O Thou, my life,
> That which Thou gavest me the other day."

"By 'other day' is meant the day of the eternity of God, which is other than the day of time. In that day of eternity God predestined the soul unto glory, and determined the degree of glory which He would give it and freely gave from the beginning before He created it."

The soul declares in these verses that it will find this gift again in this union of love. That is indeed what it meant in the last verse by the words "that which Thou gavest me the other day," since, as we have said, the soul, in its state of perfection, attains to the same purity and the same cleanness.

St. John therefore affirms here that in the spiritual marriage the soul reaches a purity similar to that of original justice or of baptismal innocence. This is an important statement. From this affirmation we may draw two conclusions which interest us: (i) the spiritual marriage is normal; (2) it is mystical.

It is normal, for the purity of original justice or of baptismal innocence, which the soul receives in the spiritual marriage, excludes every moral imperfection; and this exclusion is the normal end to which all souls can and must tend. This state is mystical, for in the present order a permanent state, similar to that of original or baptismal innocence, without moral imperfection, in the full activity of the spiritual faculties, cannot be attained in the purely ascetical way by our own efforts, but only in the mystical way by the special operation of the Holy Ghost. It requires the grace of infused contemplation and the activity of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, as is evident from all the texts from the works of St. John of the Cross. In this state the soul "experiences interiorly a sort of fruition, a sweetness which makes it overflow with praise." The

[30] Cf. st. 32.

purity to which it has attained is "bestowed on it by the Bridegroom as the fruit of this transformation of love." The touches of the passive graces are evident in this state. Is not this also a normal growth of perfect love?

St. 39. The Flame of Sweet Transformation

The spiritual marriage is described in this stanza as the state of the most sublime perfection and transformation in God. St. John bases his teaching on the words of St. Paul: "And because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying: Abba (Father)";[81] on the words of our Lord: "Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me; that they may see My glory which Thou hast given Me";[82] and on the words of St. Peter: "He hath given us most great and precious promises, that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature."[83] All these quotations admirably confirm our thesis that in the opinion of St. John of the Cross the spiritual marriage is the full and normal development, the flowering of the life of grace, the normal end of supernatural life on earth.

St. John of the Cross also teaches in this stanza that perfect love is obtained in the mystical way by the "breathing of the air," that is, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and that it is accompanied by mystical contemplation, which is not only the means,[34] but also the effect of perfect love.[88]

The spouse, we said, wishes two things in the preceding stanza: first, what her soul had as an end; then, what the Bridegroom had given her the other day. The soul sets forth in the present stanza the parts of its end: that is, not only perfect love, but also all that comes to the soul through it.

Therefore the soul enumerates five things which detail all that it admits having in view here: first the breathing of the air; then the love of which we have spoken, the principal object that it has in view; . . . fourthly, the pure and clear contemplation of the divine essence.

"The breathing of the air." This is a property of the Holy Ghost

« Gal. 4:6.
'' John 17:24.
'' Cf. II Pct. 1:4.
Cf. st. 19, 38.
'' Sr. Thomas, Ila Ilae, q. 180, a. 1.

which the soul asks for here in order to love God perfectly. It calls it the "breathing of the air" because it is a touch or a very delicate feeling of love, ordinarily produced in the soul in this state by the presence of the Holy Ghost.

Thus, according to St. John of the Cross, to love God perfectly the "breathing of the air," or the touch of the Holy Ghost, is necessary; this is certainly a mystical grace ordinarily produced in the spiritual marriage.[36]

The fourth request is " 'In the serene night.' That is, contemplation, in which the soul desires to behold the grove. It is called night because contemplation is dim; and that is the reason why it is also called mystical theology, that is, the secret or hidden wisdom of God, where, without the sound of words, or the intervention of any bodily or spiritual sense, as it were in silence and in repose, in the darkness of sense and nature, God teaches the soul—and the soul knows not how—in a most secret and hidden way. . . .

"Some spiritual writers call this 'understanding without understanding,' because it does not take place in what philosophers call the active understanding, which is conversant with the forms, fancies, and apprehensions of the physical faculties, but in the understanding as it is possible and passive, which without receiving such forms, receives passively only the substantial knowledge of them free from all imagery. This occurs without effort or exertion on its part, and for this reason contemplation is called night.

"Still, however clear may be its knowledge, it is dark night in comparison with that of the blessed, for which the soul prays. Hence, while it prays for clear contemplation, that is, the fruition of the grove, and its beauty with the other objects here enumerated, it says, let it be in the night now serene; that is, in the clear beatific contemplation."

This magnificent description of mystical contemplation proves conclusively to us that the spiritual marriage is a mystical state. But this mystical contemplation, according to the terms of St. John of the Cross, is "that which comes to the soul through perfect love." It is, therefore, not purely accidental, but is the essential effect, the distinctive characteristic, of perfect love, as it was also, we have seen, the means, the disposition to obtain this love.[37] But if mystical

·· Cf. st. 28.
,T Cf. st. 19,38.

contemplation is the characteristic of perfect love and its necessary disposition, it is surely in the normal way, as perfect love itself is.

St. 40. The Final Preparations of the Soul

In the last stanza, St. John of the Cross describes the perfection of the virtues in the spiritual marriage and the perfect harmony in this state between the lower and the higher parts of man.

In this stanza the soul wishes to make it known that it is ready to receive the favors to be enjoyed in this state, gifts which it has asked of the Bridegroom and which, if the soul is not ready, it can neither receive nor preserve. Therefore the soul puts before the Beloved four dispositions or preparations which made possible what precedes, in order to urge Him still more to grant it the favors mentioned: "The first is that the soul is detached from all things and a stranger to them. The second is that the devil is overcome and put to flight. The third is that the passions are subdued and the natural desires mortified. The fourth . . . that the sensual and lower nature of the soul is changed and purified, and so conformed to the spiritual, as not only not to hinder spiritual blessings, but is, on the contrary, prepared for them. . . ."

" 'None saw it.' That is, my soul is so detached, so denuded, so lonely, so estranged from all created things, in heaven and earth; it has become so recollected in Thee, that nothing whatever can come within sight of that most intimate joy which I have in Thee. That is, there is nothing whatever that can cause me pleasure with its sweetness, or disgust with its vileness; for my soul is so far removed from all such things, . . . that nothing can behold me.

"This is not all, for: 'Neither did Aminadab appear.' Aminadab, in the Holy Writings, signified the devil; that is, the enemy of the soul, in a spiritual sense, who is ever fighting against it, and disturbing it with his innumerable artillery, that it may not enter into the fortress and secret place of interior recollection with the Bridegroom. There the soul is so protected, so strong, so triumphant in virtue which it then practices, so defended by God's right hand, that the devil not only dares not approach it, but runs away from it in great fear, and does not venture to appear. The practice of virtue, and the state of perfection to which the soul has come, is a victory

over Satan, and causes him such terror that he cannot present himself before it. Thus Aminadab appeared not with any right to keep the soul away from the object of its desire.

" 'The siege was intermitted.' By the siege is meant the passions and desires, which, when not overcome and mortified, surround the soul and fight it on all sides. Hence the term 'siege' is applied to them. This siege is 'intermitted,' that is, the passions are subject to reason, and the desires are mortified. . . . Under these circumstances the soul entreats the Beloved to communicate to it those graces for which it has prayed, for now the siege is no hindrance. Until the four passions of the soul are ordered in reason according to God, and until the desires are mortified and purified, the soul is incapable of seeing God."

The soul says that in this state the cavalry dismount at the sight of the spiritual waters, because the sensible part of the soul is now so well purified, and in a certain way spiritualized. "So the soul with its powers of sense and natural forces becomes so recollected as to participate and rejoice to some degree in the spiritual grandeurs which God communicates to it in the spirit within."

Here again St. John of the Cross shows us that the spiritual marriage is the state of consummate perfection, the normal end of the present life, which can, however, be attained only in the mystical way, "in the fortress or the hiding place of interior recollection in the company of the Beloved."

Rich in suggestion is the conclusion by which St. John ends his work: "Whereunto [the spiritual marriage] may He bring of His mercy all those who call upon the most sweet name of Jesus, the Bridegroom of faithful souls, to whom be all honor and glory, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Amen." In these words the Mystical Doctor wishes for the grace to be introduced into the interior recollection which he has just described, that is, into the state of the spiritual marriage; and he wishes it for all those "who call upon the most sweet name of Jesus," that is, for all the faithful. Now, one does not wish for all the faithful an extraordinary grace, outside the normal way, especially if the one who wishes it is St. John of the Cross.

We shall append two texts from *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* in which the holy doctor explicitly teaches that obscure contemplation (which is without any doubt mystical contemplation) is

part of perfect union with God, and consequently is in the normal way, and that absolute renunciation in regard to all other types of knowledge does not apply to this contemplation, since it belongs to the union of love, the normal end of our life on earth.

St. John makes the following statement: "The second kind [of knowledge], which is obscure and general, has but one form, that of contemplation, which is the work of faith. The soul is to be led into this by directing it thereto through all the rest, beginning with the first and detaching it from them." [38]

Farther on he says: "This divine knowledge concerning God never relates to particular things, because it is conversant with the highest, and therefore cannot be explained unless when it is extended to some truth less than God, which is capable of being described; but this general knowledge is ineffable. It is only a soul in union with God that is capable of this profound loving knowledge, for it is itself that union. This knowledge consists in a certain contact of the soul with the Divinity, and it is God Himself who is then felt and tasted." [39] Nothing could be more clear and explicit.

From a study of all the texts that we have quoted (and they could be multiplied), it seems we may conclude that, in the opinion of St. John of the Cross, the state of the espousals and of the spiritual marriage is identified with the state of perfect love. It is, therefore, in the normal way; it is the normal end of our life on earth.[40]

To conclude and to clarify everything, we must, it seems, avoid two confusions:

i. What is essential to mystical contemplation must not be confused with what is accidental and accessory in it. The essence of mystical contemplation is the infused, obscure, general contemplation which St. John of the Cross speaks of in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*[41] and in *A Spiritual Canticle*.[42] This contemplation is produced by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, by the gifts of wisdom and understanding. The other types of supernatural knowledge, particular and distinct like visions, revelations, locutions, and so on,

[38] *The Ascent,* Bk. II, chap. 10.

[39] *Ibid.,* chap. 16.

[40] This teaching of St. John of the Cross on the normal character of the mystical life seems to be also that of St. Augustine, St. Gregory the Great, St. Bernard, St. Albert the Great, St. Bonaventure, and St. Thomas Aquinas.

[41] Bk. II, chaps. 8, 9, *16.*

[42] St. 39.

as well as ecstasies and other exterior phenomena, are only something accidental in comparison with mystical contemplation, properly so called; they are, more properly speaking, *gratiae gratis datae*[43] which the soul ought not at all to desire.

2. Sanctity should not be confused with the salvation of the soul. We do not affirm that mystical contemplation in this life is necessary for the salvation of the soul, but the question is whether it is not necessary for sanctity. By sanctity we mean a very great perfection of the love of God and of neighbor, a perfection which, nevertheless, always remains in the normal way, for the precept of love has no limits.[44]

To state the matter with greater precision, the sanctity in question here is the normal immediate prelude of the life of heaven, a prelude which is realized either on earth or in purgatory, and which presupposes that the soul is fully purified, capable of receiving the beatific vision immediately. Finally, when we say that, according to St. John of the Cross, infused contemplation is necessary for sanctity, we mean a moral necessity, in other words, that in the majority of cases sanctity will not be attained without it. And we even add that without it the soul will not actually have the full perfection of the Christian life, which implies the eminent exercise of the theological virtues and of the gifts of the Holy Ghost which accompany them.

Note

To this very remarkable article which Father Alexander Rozwadowski, S.J., wrote in 1936, we shall add a simple remark: Father Gabriel of St. Magdalen, C.D., has since that date drawn much nearer to this point of view. In fact, in an article in the *Angelicum,*[1] after describing the transforming union and quoting the moving call of St. John of the Cross to negligent souls, created, nevertheless, for such grandeurs,[2] he wrote: "This call, addressed by the saint to souls in general, shows us that he cannot consider 'extraordinary' the sublime things that he has just described for us. Not everyone is invited to graces which are privileges. The object of

[43] Cf. *Summa,* la Ilae, q. 111, a. 1, 4, 5.

[44] *Summa,* Ila Ilae, q. 184, a.3.

[1] "Les Sommets de la vie d'amour," *Angelicum,* January, 1937, pp. 178-80.

[2] *A Spiritual Canticle,* st. 39, par. 8.

the sacerdotal prayer of Christ, made for 'all those who should believe in Him,' cannot, in its turn, be a 'reserved' good; and that which constitutes the flowering of the seed of supernatural life in our souls, which sanctifying grace is, must be prepared for all those who are endowed with grace." Likewise in regard to the desire for equality of love, he writes: "There is, therefore, in our charity for God an aspiration connatural to mystical love; such love is in no way 'extraordinary' for a soul endowed with the virtue of charity, but brings this virtue to its ultimate and integral perfection."

Lastly, infused contemplation, without which mystical love does not exist, is not extraordinary either, as Father Gabriel recognizes: "For St. John of the Cross, the 'illumination' of faith is the work of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. He has, moreover, strongly affirmed 'that faith leads the soul to union.'[8] He could not uphold such a thesis if it were necessary to add other 'extraordinary' principles to faith." . . . We may therefore conclude, Father Gabriel says at the end of his article, that neither does the light necessary for the transformation of love belong to the order of reserved privileges. It is a "connatural" light: the light of faith accompanied by that of the gifts. Faith and the gifts are elements of our supernatural "organism." . . . Unfortunately the soul often recoils before the indispensable suffering which should prepare union. Let us not forget that "the door by which we enter into the riches of the knowledge of God is the cross."[4]

Father Arintero, O.P., taught this same doctrine from 1908 on in *Evolution mistica,*[6] and we have not ceased to teach it since the first edition (1923) of *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* in which we declared: "What constitutes the foundation of this eminent state, called the transforming union, is in no way miraculous."[8] And again: "All just souls are called, at least in a general and remote manner, to this transforming union, which is the normal prelude to the life of heaven. If they are faithful to this call, and

**The Ascent,* Bk. II, *passim.*

**A Spiritual Canticle,* st. 36, par. 14. We are happy to see that Father Gabriel of St. Magdalen perfectly agrees with us in refusing to admit that there are, as Father Chrysogonous claimed, "two specifically distinct modes" for the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the one ordinary, the other extraordinary. Cf. "Le double mode des dons du Saint-Esprit," *Etudes carmélitaines,* October, 1934, pp. 215-31; and *supra,* Vol. I, pp. 78-88.

' Salamanca, pp. 460-86.

• *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* p. 157.

at the same time humble and generous, they will hear a more proximate and urgent invitation.[7] St. Teresa repeats this in the Epilogue to *The Interior Castle."* [8]

The same conclusion is more or less explicitly reached by several authors who have treated of very close union with Mary in the unitive way, according to the principles set forth by St. Grignion de Montfort.' Father E. Neubert, S.M., has assembled some very significant data on this point.[10] On this subject must also be mentioned *L'Union mystique à Marie,* written by Mary of St. Teresa (1623-77), a Flemish recluse who experienced it personally.[11]

TOWARD A CLOSE UNION, ALMOST ALWAYS AN ACTUALITY
THE VALUE OF THE HIDDEN LIFE

The life of union seems to us expressed with simplicity and depth in the following letter from a contemplative religious who is still young and who has, we believe, truly found his vocation, in spite of the powerlessness of which he speaks:

Peace increases with joy, although everything sensible disappears more and more, and my poor soul is as if lost at times in the darkness, possessing nothing and unable to acquire anything by its own powers. Life becomes so simple. A single desire governs everything: to arrive at Love, to thank Him for His incomprehensible love, and to save souls. My desire for the infinity of God grows continually, and the clear view of my own nothingness is ever before my eyes. Though it humiliates me greatly, it does not discourage me. I try to live simply as at Nazareth, making each act, even the most banal, an act of perfect love. For is it not with our will that we love? What matter then if a man is truly a wretched nothing? Is not the sole, strong, and constant determination to give pleas-

7 Cf. *The Way of Perfection,* chaps. 18-21.

8 *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* p. 259.

9 *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin,* chap. 5, art. 5, An easy, short, perfect, safe way; chap. 6, art. 1, How Mary forms the predestinate; art. 2, pars. 3-5, She conducts them, defends them, intercedes for them; chap. 7, art. 3, The grace of pure love; art. 5, Communication of the soul and of the spirit of Mary; art. 6, Transformation of souls in Mary in the image of Jesus Christ.

10 Cf. "L'Union mystique à la Sainte Vierge," *La Vie spirituelle,* January, 1937, pp. 45-59.

11 *Les Cahiers de la Vierge* (May, 1936), published, under the title *L'Union mystique à Marie* by Maty of St. Teresa, the text translated from the Flemish by L. Van den Bossche. (Introduction to Marian life. Marian life. The end of Marian life.) Cf. p. 55: "In this life the soul is transformed in Mary through fusion of love"; also, pp. 62-68 *ff.*

ure to Jesus and to my heavenly Mother by each act, love which grows more perfect with the intensity of the will? Every morning and repeatedly during my work or in the recitation of the Divine Office, I say to Jesus: Beloved Jesus, I wish each thought, each word, each little action to be an act of perfect love, and to each one of them I unite the infinite merits of Calvary, the immense merits of my Mother and of all the angels and the saints. This intention becomes more and more actual and is continually on my lips.

All (my powerlessness to understand His limitless love, my actual desire of love, my prayer for my friends, for souls), all is more and more summed up in this single word: Jesus. I think always of Him, but I do not possess Him sufficiently.

If I am mistaken in what I have just said, Father, correct me.

Oh, I see indeed that I am very wretched. All the sins and all the selfishness of my past life are ever before my eyes. I know that I have been very ungrateful. But precisely for that reason, I do not wish to lose a minute that is not an act of love. I should like my love to be as pure as possible in order that my poor life may be useful to the Church, to souls. In your letter you told me that I am not losing my life. What joy!

On the other hand, I see that I am so terribly poor. The world can offer me nothing; everything in it is vanity. This I see. The supernatural, the divine, which alone I seek, which alone can help me toward union with Jesus, I do not possess; at least I do not feel that I possess it.

My faculties no longer seem to belong to me; my thoughts do not come at will. The thought of Jesus, yes; but no others. I am convinced that I shall never be able to advance unless help comes to me from on high. Will it come? When? I wish to be patient, tranquil. May His holy will be done, and may I oppose no obstacle to it!

You know that in recent years, I have had to admit to my superiors and to everybody, that I was good for nothing, that I could no longer preach or teach. My memory retains nothing.[12] Thanks be to God, I am no longer concerned about men's opinion. I work for Jesus. Since my arrival here, I take my turn with the others for the sermons. Moreover, there are no great preachers here, and the people are simple. I also sometimes preach to our Carmelite sisters. Everybody claims to be satisfied, but these sermons are, more properly speaking, little talks in which everything is very simple and the language not elegant. I have nothing by heart; but I bring several great thoughts on a scrap of paper and try

12 It seems to retain nothing, but it assimilates and transforms the food with which it is nourished in order continually to recall the things of eternity. The writer of this letter has the impression that his memory forgets everything; in reality, it retains what is most important of all, the relation to eternity. It is no longer immersed in time; it dominates it.

to talk about them. I know that grace alone can change hearts, and that is why I wish to be increasingly united to my divine Friend. A final reason why I wish that my poor life should be as holy as possible is the good of the Province. . . .

The conviction that there is only one thing to do, to render myself increasingly like the great friends of Jesus, in order to do good to the Church and to save souls, grows continually. Besides, my holy Order exacts perfection from me; it is not sufficient to be "a good religious"; one should be closely united to God. But that is precisely what constitutes my constant torment. The thought of the unbounded love of Jesus for us is always present to my thought. What can I do in return to please Him and to save souls? It is my first thought in the morning, it returns repeatedly in the course of the day, and it is my last thought at night.

PART V

Extraordinary Graces

We have so far discussed the three ages of the interior life, considering them not under a diminished form, but as they are described by the great spiritual writers, in particular St. John of the Cross. In the course of our work we have thus spoken of the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith and of its degrees, though we did not treat of the extraordinary graces which at times accompany it, but are quite distinct from it. We shall now discuss these graces.

To proceed in an orderly fashion, we shall see first what St. Paul tells us about these graces, which he calls charisms, and how St. Thomas Aquinas explains his teaching. Next, we shall treat of private revelations, visions, interior words, divine touches, stigmatization, and suggestion. We shall sum up the classic teaching on these subjects and thus find a new confinnation of the traditional doctrine set forth earlier in this work on the axis of the spiritual life. The examination of extraordinary facts brings out more clearly what distinguishes them from what is loftiest in the normal way of sanctity.[1]

[1] We utilize in these last chapters what we wrote on these questions in an earlier book (1923), *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* pp. 436-57. It is, moreover, a simple summary of what St. John of the Cross says about essentially extraordinary graces. The studies that we have made since 1923 only confirm what we said then on this subject.

CHAPTER LUI

Charisms or Graces *Gratis Datae*

ST. PAUL speaks of these extraordinary graces in his First Epistle to the Corinthians where he says: "Now there are diversities of graces, but the same Spirit. . . . And the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man unto profit. To one indeed, by the Spirit, is given the *word of wisdom;* and to another, the *word of knowledge,* according to the same Spirit; to another, *faith* [1] in the same Spirit; to another, the *grace of healing* in one Spirit; to another, the *working of miracles;* to another, *prophecy;* to another, the *discerning of spirits;* to another, *diverse kinds of tongues;* to another, *interpretation of speeches.* But all these things one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to everyone according as He will." [2]

St. Paul places charity far above all these gifts or charisms: "If . . . I have not charity, I am nothing," [3] for my will is turned in the opposite direction from the divine will.

Nature and Division of the Charisms

As St. Thomas shows,[4] sanctifying grace and charity are much more excellent than these charisms; the former unite us immediately to God, our last end, whereas these exceptional gifts are directed chiefly to the benefit of our neighbor and only prepare him to be converted, without giving him divine life. As a rule, they are not

[1] This does not mean the theological virtue of faith, since this virtue is common to all Christians. Rather it is a question of a special certitude and security which God grants to those whose duty it is to transmit His divine word to others with a conviction that nothing can shake. This faith, *gratis data,* is given to great preachers and also to theologians. The theologians of Salamanca say *(De fide,* disp. I, dub. IV, no. 113): "Praedicta fides confertur ut in plurimum Doctoribus Ecclesiae circa articulos fidei catholicae."

[2] Cf. I Cor. 12:4, 7-11. Also Rom. *11:6.*

[3] Cf. I Cor. 13:3.

[4] *Su?mna,* Ia Ilae, q.

essentially supernatural like sanctifying grace, but only preternatural like a miracle and prophecy. They are only signs which confirm the divine revelation proposed to all, or the sanctity of great servants of God.

There is an immense difference between the essentially supernatural character of sanctifying grace and the supematuralness of these charisms. Grace is essentially supernatural as a participation in the intimate life of God; it is consequently invisible and not naturally knowable. Whereas these naturally knowable signs are not supernatural by their essence, but only by the mode of their production: thus the resurrection of a dead body restores natural life (vegetative and sensitive) in a supernatural manner, but does not produce supernatural life, the participation in the divine life. What is supernatural in these signs is, therefore, exterior and very inferior to that of the grace received in baptism.

The nature of these charisms may be more clearly seen in the division that St. Thomas[5] gives of them, following the text of St. Paul, which we quoted before.

Graces *gratis datae* to instruct one's neighbor concerning divine things	i. Graces that give full knowledge of divine things	*faith* or special certitude as to principles. *word of wisdom,* on the principal conclusions known through the first cause. *word of knowledge,* on the examples and effects which manifest the causes.
	2. Graces that confirm divine revelation	by works [gift *of healing.* [gift *of miracles.* by knowledge [*discerning of spirits,* *prophecy.*
	3. Graces that aid in preaching the word of God	*gift of tongues.* *gift of interpretation of speeches.*

[5] *Ibid.,* a. 4.

It is easy to see that St. Paul and St. John the Evangelist excelled in the word of wisdom; St. Matthew and St. James in the word of knowledge; that certain saints, such as St. Vincent Ferrer, received the gift of miracles in a striking manner; others, such as St. John Bosco, that of prophecy; still others, Eke the holy Curé of Ars, the discerning of spirits.

Application of This Doctrine by St. John of the Cross

To these charisms are generally linked the extraordinary favors which sometimes accompany infused contemplation, that is, private revelations, supernatural words, visions. St. John of the Cross treats these favors at length in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,*[6] distinguishing them with great care from infused contemplation, which belongs to the grace of the virtues and gifts, or sanctifying grace, as we saw earlier in this work.

The teaching of St. John of the Cross on this point rests theologically on the tract on prophecy expounded by St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa theologica.*[7] In question 175 St. Thomas devotes six articles[8] to rapture which sometimes accompanies prophetic revelation, as it may also accompany infused contemplation.

St. Thomas there explains in particular that prophetic revelation may be made in three ways: by a sensible vision, an imaginary vision, or an intellectual vision; and the prophet may be awake, asleep, or in ecstasy.

The vision is said to be sensible or corporeal when a sensible and exterior sign appears to the eyes or when an exterior voice is heard.[9] The vision is called imaginary when God, in order to express His thought to us, coordinates certain images that pre-exist in our imagination, or imprints new ones on it.[10] There is a supernatural intellectual vision when He acts immediately on the intellect by coordinating our acquired ideas or by imprinting new ideas, called infused.[11] There is always infused prophetic light to judge super-

[6] Bk. II, chaps. 10-31.
[7] Cf. IIa IIae, q. 171-175.
[8] *Ibid.,* q. 175.
[9] Cf. *Ibid.,* q. 174, a. 1 ad 3um.
[10] *Ibid.,* q. 173, a. 1 ad mm.
[11] *Ibid.,* ad mm.

naturally of what is proposed, and indeed this light alone suffices to interpret certain signs, as Joseph interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh.[12]

If the prophet is awake, the vision is more perfect than if given to him during sleep, because he has the full use of his faculties.[13] Occasionally the so-called imaginary vision and the intellectual vision are accompanied by ecstasy, or alienation of the senses.[14] Ecstasy, especially when it is only partial (the alienation of one sense and not of all), may be a natural effect of the absorption of the higher faculties in the object manifested; the soul can no longer be attentive to exterior things.[15] But when ecstasy, instead of following, so to speak, precedes the vision or infused contemplation and prepares the soul for it, then ecstasy is extraordinary and deserves the name of rapture; it then implies a certain violence which lifts the soul above inferior things in order to fix it in God.[16]

Christ and the Blessed Virgin had all these charisms in an eminent degree, but without losing the use of their senses. It is said of St. Gertrude that she never knew the weakness of ecstasy; of our Savior and His holy Mother it must be said that from the very beginning of their lives they were superior to ecstasy and rapture.[17]

Following these principles accepted by theologians, St. John of the Cross draws a clear distinction between general and obscure infused contemplation [18] and different modes of particular and distinct supernatural knowledge: (1) visions, sensible, imaginary, or intellectual;[18] (2) revelations;[20] (3) interior words.[21] After enumerating these modes of knowledge, St. John of the Cross adds: "In

[12] *Ibid.,* a. 2.
[13] *Ibid.,* q. 174, a. 3.
[14] *Ibid.,* a. 1 ad jum.
[15] Cf. St. Thomas, *De veritate,* q. 13, a. 3: "Cum totaliter anima intendat ad actum unius potentiae, abstrahitur homo ab actu alterius potentiae." The mathematician who, like Archimedes, is greatly absorbed in his calculations, no longer hears what is said to him, or no longer sees what is before him. With even greater reason, intense infused contemplation may produce this effect. Cf. IIa IIae, q. 173, a. 3, on partial or total ecstasy. Neither is necessary to prophecy or infused contemplation. Cf. *ibid.*
[16] See IIa IIae, q. 175, a. 1 and a. 2 ad mm: "Rapture adds something to ecstasy . . . a certain violence in addition."
[17] Cf. IIIa, q. 10, 11.
[18] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. II, chaps. 1-9.
[19] *Ibid.,* chaps. 10-24.
[20] *Ibid.,* chaps. 25-27.
[21] *Ibid.,* chaps. 28-31.

regard to obscure and general knowledge, there is no division; it is contemplation received in faith. This contemplation is the end to which we should lead the soul; all other knowledge should be directed toward this, beginning with the first; and the soul should progress by detaching itself from all of them." 22

Following the example of St. Thomas,23 we shall proceed from the general to the particular, and we shall first discuss revelations; then we shall see the special modes of their manifestation, that is, either by visions, or by words, a mode which is generally more expressive.

Moreover, we shall consider first among these favors those that are more exterior, that are manifestly directed toward the benefit of our neighbor and are more directly connected with charisms or graces *gratis datae.* Next, we shall consider those which are more directly ordained to the sanctification of the person who receives them. This is particularly the case with various interior locutions and also with divine touches received in the will, which St. John of the Cross discusses last.24

Proceeding in this manner from the general to the particular, from the exterior to the interior, we shall avoid repetition and more clearly understand the divine action in souls. We shall see that extraordinary favors, like the stigmata, are exceptional signs given by God from time to time to draw us from our spiritual somnolence and to attract our attention more strongly to the great mysteries of faith by which we should live more profoundly every day, in particular to the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation.28

" *Ibid.,* chap. io.

'· See Ila Ilae, q. 171, 173, 174.

** *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. II, chap. 32.

28 Cf. Father Gabriel of St. Magdalen, "Visions et révélations chez sainte Thérèse," *Etudes carmélitaines,* October, 1938, pp. 190-200. ("Progressive development. Classification. The role of visions in the life of St. Teresa. The security of the visions of St. Teresa. Conclusion.") The author shows that in *The Interior Castle* (sixth mansion, chap. 2) spiritual locutions are one of the means God uses to "awaken" the soul and prepare it for the spiritual espousals. Later they enlighten the saint on her role as foundress. St. Teresa's visions continually enlighten her more on the depths of the mysteries of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity and on the redemptive Incarnation. In St. Teresa's case, these visions are at first purely intellectual, then occasionally an imaginary "fringe" is added to them. The imagination has a secondary and comparatively minor role in them. Hers is a privileged case, and privileged cases are rare.

CHAPTER LIV

Divine Revelations and Visions

DIVINE revelations manifest supematurally a hidden truth by-means of a vision, a word, or only a prophetic instinct; they presuppose the gift of prophecy. They are called public if they have been made by the prophets, Christ, or the apostles, and are proposed to all by the Church, which preserves them in Scripture and tradition. They are called private when they are directed only to the particular benefit of certain persons. Private revelations, no matter what their importance, do not belong to the deposit of Catholic faith. However, some may draw attention to a certain form of worship of a nature to interest all the faithful, for example, the devotion to the Sacred Heart. After examining the reasons which motivate this worship, the Church may promote it and establish it without judging infallibly about the divine origin of the private revelation which gave rise to this movement of prayer. These private revelations will remain the object of pious belief, as will the supernatural origin of exceptional favors which occasionally accompany them, such as the stigmata of a particular servant of God.[1]

What Should Be Thought of Private Revelations

Those who receive divine revelations, recognized as such, should most certainly, after prudent and authoritative judgment, incline

[1] Cf. M. J. Congar, O.P., "La crédibilité des révélations privées" *(La Vie spirituelle,* October i, 1937, suppl., pp. [29]–[49]: "As ecclesiastical authority is an essentially paternal and family authority,—for the Church does not only govern us, it begets us in Christ—it is, in the last analysis, under the influence of filial piety that we adhere, by human faith commanded by obedience, to what the Church tells us about the formal and positive element in some very rare cases of private revelations."

respectfully before this supernatural manifestation.[3] St. Margaret Mary followed this rule in regard to devotion to the Sacred Heart; so also did St. Bernadette in respect to the revelations she received at Lourdes, after favorable examination by diocesan authority.

According to certain theologians, a person who receives a private divine revelation with the certitude of its divine origin, like St. Joan of Arc, should believe in it with divine theological faith, for, in their opinion, the revelation contains the formal motive of infused faith, the authority of God revealing.[8]

According to other theologians, and their opinion seems more exact, anyone who receives a certain private revelation should adhere to it immediately, not through divine faith but by prophetic light. This supernatural certitude may last or, on the contrary, give way to a moral certitude when the prophetic illumination disappears; but this illumination may return in order to restore the first certitude.[4]

When the Church approves private revelations made to the saints, she simply declares that they contain nothing contrary to Scripture and to Catholic teaching and that they may be proposed as probable to the pious belief of the faithful.® Private revelations may not be published without the approbation of ecclesiastical authority.®

Even in revelations approved as probable by the Church, some

1 Cf. Benedict XIV, *De servorum Dei beatificatione,* Bk. Ill, ch. ult., no. 12. See also C. De Lugo, S.J., *De fide,* disp. I, sect. 11.

' Such is the opinion of Cardinal Gotti, O.P., *Theol. schol. dogtn.,* I, tract. 9, q.i, dub. 3, par. 2. It should be remarked on this subject that when an attempt was made to obtain a denial of her divine mission from St. Joan of Arc, she replied that she had to believe in it as she believed in the mystery of the redemption; and several times she appealed to the pope, as the supreme judge in these matters.

* The Carmelites of Salamanca *(De fide,* disp. 1, dub. IV, no. 104, in) quote St. Thomas and his principal interpreters in favor of this opinion. They also point out that a number of these revelations bear on temporal matters (for example, the proximate date of the end of a war), which have not a sufficient bond with the first object of theological faith to be believed on divine faith.

However, several of these theologians admit that adherence to a certain private revelation on the part of the person receiving it, may proceed either from prophetic light or from faith which is mentioned among the graces *gratis datae* (I Cor. 12:4-10).

' Benedict XIV, *op. cit.,* II, chap. 32, no. 11.

•Cf. the decree of Urban VIII, March 13, 1625, which was confirmed by Clement IX, May 23, 1668.

error may slip in; for the saints themselves may attribute to the Holy Ghost what proceeds from themselves, or may falsely interpret the meaning of a divine revelation, or interpret it in too materialistic a manner, as, for example, the disciples interpreted Christ's remark about St. John to mean that the latter would not die.[7]

The explanation of this possibility of error lies in the fact that there are many degrees in prophetic light, from the simple, supernatural instinct to perfect revelation. When there is only prophetic instinct, the meaning of things revealed and even the divine origin of the revelation may remain unknown.[8] Thus it was that Caiphas prophesied, without being aware of it, when he said, "that it was expedient that one man should die for the people."[9]

One of the signs of the divine origin of a revelation is the humility and simplicity with which the favored soul receives it and, without excessive attachment to it, communicates it briefly to its spiritual director, whom it obeys perfectly as the minister of Jesus Christ.[10] The gift of prophecy may, it is true, be found in those who do not possess these qualities, but such an exception is rare.

Before regulating its conduct, at least indirectly, by a private revelation, a soul that is truly enlightened by God will always consult its director or some other learned and discreet person who will examine the matter from the point of view of faith, theology, and supernatural prudence. St. Teresa insists particularly on this point.[11] This is especially necessary since the soul may easily go astray in the interpretation of revelations, either because it considers them too literally and according to habits tainted with egoism, or because they are sometimes conditional.[12] A learned, prudent, and virtuous confessor, however, has graces of state which make him avoid error, especially when he prays humbly, fervently, and assiduously for these graces. He himself then receives the inspirations of the gift of counsel that he may see clearly and judge rightly.

What should be thought of the desire for revelations? St. John of the Cross, who often invites interior souls to desire humbly, but confidently and ardently, the infused contemplation of the mysteries

[7] John 21:23.
[8] St. Thomas, IIa IIae, q. 173, a.4.
[9] John 18:14.
[10] Cf. Cardinal Bona, *De discretione spirituum,* chap. 20.
[11] *The Interior Castle,* sixth mansion, chap. 3.
[12] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. II, chaps. 19-20.

of faith and the divine union resulting therefrom, strongly reproves the desire for revelations. On this point he is in complete accord with St. Vincent Ferrer,[1*] and shows that the soul desiring revelations is vain; that by this curiosity it gives the devil the opportunity to lead it astray;[14] that this inclination takes away the purity of faith,[18] produces a hindrance for the spirit,[16] denotes a lack of humility,[17] and exposes it to many errors.[18] To ask for revelations shows also a lack of respect toward Christ, because the fullness of revelation has been given in the Gospel.[19] God sometimes grants these extraordinary favors to weak souls,[20] or again to strong souls that have an exceptional mission to accomplish in the midst of great difficulties; but to desire them is at least a venial sin, even when the soul has a good end in view.[31] They are of value only because of the humility and love of God which they awaken in the soul.[22] All this shows clearly the error of imprudent directors who, impelled by curiosity, are concerned with souls favored by visions and revelations.[23] This curiosity is a deformation of the spirit which casts the soul into illusion and trouble, and turns it away from humility through vain complacency in extraordinary ways.

Finally, St. John of the Cross insists strongly on the fact that the desire for revelations turns the soul away from infused contemplation. He says: "The soul imagines that something great has taken place, that God Himself has spoken, when in reality there is very little, or nothing, or less than nothing. In truth, of what use is that which is void of humility, charity, mortification, holy simplicity, silence, etc.? This is why I affirm that these illusions offer a great obstacle to divine union, for if the soul makes much of them,

[18] St. Vincent Ferrer, *Treatise on the Spiritual Life,* chap. 13.
[14] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. II, chap. 11.
["] *Ibid.*
[18] *Ibid.,* chap. 16.
[IT] *Ibid.,* chaps. 16, 17.
[18] *Ibid.,* chaps, 21, 27.
[18] *Ibid.,* chaps. 19, 22. Under the Old Law it was otherwise, for the plenitude of revelation had not yet been given.
[20] For example, to convert them; thus the young Israelite Alphonse Ratisbonne, at the age of twenty and still far from the Catholic Church, received while visiting the church of St. Andrea delle Frate in Rome as a sight-seer a vision of the Blessed Virgin which was the beginning of his conversion.
[81] *The Ascent,* Bk. 11, chap. 21.
[1*] *Ibid.,* Bk. Ill, chaps. 9, 12.
[**] *Ibid.,* Bk. II, chap. 22.

this fact alone drives it very far from the abyss of faith. . . . The Holy Ghost enlightens the recollected intellect according to the measure of its recollection. The most perfect recollection is that which takes place in faith. . . . Infused charity is in proportion to the purity of the soul in a perfect faith: the more intense such charity is, the more the Holy Ghost enlightens the soul and communicates His gifts to it." [24] No words could more strongly condemn the desire for revelations and make the soul long for that perfect spirit of faith, which is found in infused contemplation and which leads to almost continual intimate union with God.

As we have pointed out several times, it is, therefore, a serious error, rather frequently committed, to confound the desire for revelations with a desire for infused contemplation. Not only is the former blameworthy, but it also turns the soul away from infused contemplation, which is highly desirable. St. John of the Cross thus gives us the loftiest commentary on St. Thomas' words: "Sanctifying grace is much nobler than *gratia gratis data."* [28] In other words, sanctifying grace (with charity and the seven gifts connected with it) is far superior to the charisms, and even to prophecy, the highest of all. This statement puts clearly before us the whole scope of St. Paul's reaching on the eminence of charity.[2*]

However, at this point in our study we must distinguish two kinds of private revelations: (i) revelations properly so called reveal secrets about God or His works; (2) revelations improperly so called give a greater understanding of supernatural truths already known by faith.[27]

1) Revelations manifesting secrets to us are much more subject to illusion. Without doubt God sometimes reveals to the living the time that remains to them on this earth, the trials that they will undergo, what will happen to a nation, to a certain person. But the devil can easily counterfeit these things and, to gain credence for his lies, he begins by nourishing the spirit with likely things or even with partial truths.[28] St. John of the Cross says: "It is almost impossible to escape his wiles if the soul does not immediately get rid of them, because the spirit of evil knows well how to assume the

'* *Ibid.,* Bk. II, chap. 29.
28 See la Ilae, q. 111, a.4.
'' Cf.ICor. 13.
27 *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. II, chap. 25.
*· *Ibid.,* chap. 27.

appearance of truth and give this appearance credit." [29] "In order to be perfect there is, therefore, no reason to desire these extraordinary supernatural things. . . . The soul must prudently guard itself against all these communications if it wishes, in purity and without illusions, to reach divine union by the night of faith." [80] No words could make a clearer distinction between these extraordinary supernatural things and infused contemplation, and more effectively show that infused contemplation is normal in the perfect.

2) Revelations improperly so called, which give us a greater understanding of revealed truths, are associated with infused contemplation, especially if they concern God Himself and do not stop at particular things, but profoundly penetrate His wisdom, infinite goodness, or omnipotence. In *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* St. John of the Cross says on this subject: "This profound loving knowledge is, moreover, accessible only to a soul in union with God. Such knowledge is this union itself, for it has its origin precisely in a certain contact of the soul with the Divinity. Consequently it is God Himself who is felt and tasted, though He is not perceived manifestly in full light, as He is in glory; but the touch is so strong and so profound, by reason of the knowledge and attraction, that it penetrates the substance of the soul. It is impossible for the devil to interfere in this and to deceive by imitation, for nothing is comparable to it, or approaches it in enjoyment and delights. These touches savor of the divine essence and of eternal life, and the devil cannot counterfeit such lofty things. . . . In regard to the other perceptions, we said that the soul should abstract itself from them, but this duty ceases in the case of this lofty loving knowledge, since it is the manifestation of that union to which we are trying to conduct the soul. All that we have taught previously on the subject of despoliation and of complete detachment was directed toward this union; and the divine favors which result from it are the fruit of humility, of the desire to suffer for the love of God, with resignation and disinterestedness as to all reward." [81]

[29] *Ibid.*
[80] *Ibid.*
[81] Bk. II, chap. *26.*

Supernatural Visions

Divine revelations sometimes take the form of visions and at other times of words. Supernatural visions are either sensible, imaginary, or intellectual.

Sensible or corporal visions of our Savior, the Blessed Virgin, or the saints, are sometimes granted to beginners to detach them from worldly things. If the vision is common to a great number of persons, it is a sign that the apparition is exterior, without any certainty thereby that it is of divine origin.[32] If it is individual, the dispositions of the witness who declares that he has had it must be attentively examined and great prudence must be exercised.

The director will be able to recognize whether these apparitions are graces of God, by their conformity to the teaching of the Church and by the fruits which they leave in the soul. The soul itself should be very faithful in reaping the fruits of sanctity which God proposes by granting it these favors. Those who are favored with apparitions of our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, and the saints should render to the persons represented the honors due them, even though the apparition should be the result of an illusion of the imagination or of the devil, for as St. Teresa says: "Although a painter may be a wicked man, honor should none the less be paid to a portrait of Christ done by him."[88] These apparitions must never be desired or asked of God.

Imaginary visions are produced in the imagination by God or by the angels when a person is either awake or asleep. According to the Gospel, St. Joseph was on several occasions supernaturally instructed in a dream. Although the divine origin of a dream may be difficult to discern, ordinarily when the soul seeks God sincerely, He makes Himself felt either by a feeling of profound peace, or by events that confirm the vision; thus in a dream a sinner may be warned of the urgent necessity of conversion.

Imaginary visions are subject to the illusions of the imagination and of the devil.[84] We have three signs, however, by which to dis-

[32] St. Thomas, la, q.ji, a. a.

[88] *The Interior Castle,* sixth mansion, chap. o. Signs of respect should, however, be given only conditionally if the soul thinks that perhaps the devil wishes in this way to make himself adored under the figure of Christ.

[84] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. II, chap. 16.

cem whether they are of divine origin: (1) when they cannot be produced or dismissed at will, but come suddenly and last but a short time; (2) when they leave the soul in great peace; (3) when they produce fruits of virtue, a great humility and perseverance in good.[38]

A divine imaginary vision, granted while a person is awake, is almost always accompanied by at least partial ecstasy (for example, the momentary loss of sight) so that the soul may distinguish the interior apparition from external impressions;[80] there is ecstasy also because a soul enraptured and united to God loses contact with external things.'' No perfect imaginary vision occurs without an intellectual vision, which makes the soul see and penetrate its meaning: [88] for example, the former may concern the sacred humanity of Christ; the second, His divinity.[89]

Imaginary visions should not be desired or asked of God any more than sensible visions; they are in no way necessary to holiness.[40] The perfect spirit of faith and infused contemplation are of superior order and prepare the soul more immediately for divine union.[41]

An intellectual vision is the certain manifestation of an object to the intellect without any actual dependence on sensible images. It is brought about either by acquired ideas supematurally coordinated or modified, or by infused ideas, which are sometimes of angelic order.[42] It requires, besides, an infused light, that of the gift of wisdom or of prophecy. It may refer to God, spirits, or material things, like the purely spiritual knowledge of the angels. The intellectual vision is at times obscure and indistinct, that is, it manifests with certitude the presence of the object without any detail as to its intimate nature. Thus St. Teresa often felt our Lord Jesus Christ near her for several days.[43] At other times the intellectual vision is clear and distinct; it is then more rapid and is a sort of intuition of

·· *The Interior Castle,* sixth mansion, chap. 9.
·· *Summa,* IIa IIae, q. 173, a. 3.
•T *The Interior Castle, loc. cit.*
••St. Thomas, *De veritate,* q. 12, a. 12.
·· St. Teresa, *Life,* chap. 29.
40 The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Bk. II, chaps. 16, 17; *The Interior Castle, loc. cit.*
41 The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Bk. II, chap. 8.
** *Summa,* IIa IIae, q. 173, a. 2 ad aum; *De veritate,* q. 12, a. 12.
44 Life, chap. 27.

divine truths or of created things in God.[44] It cannot be translated into human language.[45]

Intellectual visions, especially those caused by infused ideas, are free from the illusions of the imagination and of the devil; but at times what is only an over-excitement of the imagination or a suggestion of the devil[48] may be taken for an intellectual vision. The divine origin of these favors may be recognized from the effects they produce: deep peace, holy joy, profound humility, unshakable attachment to virtue.[47]

St. John of the Cross says: "By the very fact that this knowledge is communicated suddenly, independently of the will, it is useless for the soul to desire it - - - ; it ought simply to allow God to act when and how He wills. . . . These favors are not given to a soul which is attached to any good; they are the effect of a special love which God bears toward the soul which strives for Him in detachment and disinterested love." [48]

The loftiest intellectual visions, since they are inferior to the beatific vision, cannot attain the divine essence *sicuti est,* but only "by a certain manner of representation" due to infused ideas, as St. Teresa says.[48] In the opinion of a number of authors,[50] the intellectual visions that often accompany the transforming union are the equivalent of a special revelation that gives the soul the certitude of being in the state of grace and of predestination. St. John of the Cross even says, as we have seen: "In my opinion, the soul can never be placed in possession of this state [the transforming union] without at the same time being confirmed in grace." [51]

44 The Interior Castle, sixth mansion, chap, io; *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. II, chaps, 22, 24.

48 The Interior Castle, loc. cit.

48 The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Bk. II, chap. 24.

« Ibid.

48 The Ascent of Mount Carmel, loc. cit.

48 The Interior Castle, seventh mansion, chap. 1.

80 Philip of the Blessed Trinity, *Theol. myst. Prooem.,* a. 8; Scaramelli, *Dir. myst.,* tr. II, chap. 22, no. 258; Meynard, O.P., *La Vie intérieure,* Vol. II, no. 270.

81A Spiritual Canticle, st. 22.

CHAPTER LV

Supernatural Words and Divine Touches

SUPERNATURAL WORDS are manifestations of God's thought which are heard either by the exterior senses or by the interior senses or immediately by the intellect.

The Different Kinds of Supernatural Words

An *auricular stipernatural word* is a vibration formed in the air by the ministry of angels. For example, St. Luke records [1] that Zachary heard the angel Gabriel speak to him. The same angel Gabriel said to Mary: "Hail, full of grace." [2] Like corporal visions, these locutions are subject to illusions; the same rules should be applied to them to discern those of divine origin.

Imaginary supernatural words are heard by the imagination, when the person is either awake or asleep. They sometimes seem to come from heaven; at other times from the depths of one's heart. They are perfectly distinct, although not heard with bodily ears.[3] They are not easily forgotten; those especially which contain a prophecy remain graven on the memory.[4] To recover the exact statement of the words heard, it is sometimes necessary that the person who has heard them should recollect himself and make mental prayer; in this way he can avert the slightest variation.

These supernatural words can be distinguished from those of our spirit by the fact that they are not heard at will, and that they are words and works at one and the same time. For example, when they

[1] Luke 1:19.
[2] *Ibid.,* 1:28.
[3] St. Teresa, *Life,* chap. 25.
[4] *Ibid.*

reprove us for our faults, they suddenly change our interior dispositions and render us capable of undertaking everything for the service of God.[8] It is then easy to discern them.[9]

When imaginary words come from the devil, they not only do not produce good effects, but, on the contrary, produce evil effects. The soul is disturbed, troubled, frightened, disgusted; and if it experiences any sensible pleasure, it is very different from divine peace? These diabolical words resemble supernatural words of divine origin as glass beads resemble diamonds. It is often easy to perceive the difference immediately.

Intellectual words are heard directly by the intellect without the intermediary of the senses or imagination, in the way the angels communicate their thoughts to one another at will. They suppose a divine light and the coordination of pre-existent acquired ideas, and at times of infused ideas. As St. Teresa says: "It is a wordless language, which is the tongue of the fatherland." [*]

Theologians teach, with St. John of the Cross, that intellectual words may be either successive, formal, or substantial.[10] We shall recapitulate their teaching here.

Successive intellectual words are produced only in the state of recollection; they come from our spirit which is enlightened by the Holy Ghost, and with such facility and new views that the understanding cannot imagine that they spring from its own depths.[11] These successive words are subject to illusion, for the spirit, which at the beginning followed only the truth, may deviate and even go seriously astray, inasmuch as the devil often insinuates himself into these successive words, especially when people are attached to them. He acts thus with even greater reason toward those who are bound to him by a tacit or formal act, with heretics who persist in their errors, and especially with heresiarchs.[12]

Successive words come from God when they simultaneously produce in the soul an increase of charity and humility. But it is

[8] *Ibid.*
[9] *Ibid.*
[7] *Ibid.* St. Thomas, Ia, q. 111, a. i, 3; q. i14; la Ilae, q.80, a. 1-3.
[*] Cf. St. Teresa, la, q. 107, a. i; also Cajetan's commentary.
[*] St. Teresa, *Life,* chap. *ij.*
[10] *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. II, chaps. 28-31.
[11] *Ibid.,* chap. 29.
[12] *Ibid.*

sometimes difficult clearly to discern supernatural love from a certain natural love, and true humility from pusillanimity. Therefore it is not easy to recognize the divine origin of successive words.[11] They should not be desired, for obscure faith is far superior to them.[14]

Formal intellectual words are so called "because the soul knows formally that they are uttered by another, without any contribution on its part . . . and it can hear them when not recollected, and even when far from thinking of what is said." [18] They are, therefore, quite different from those we have discussed, and are at times very precise; for example, Daniel says that an angel spoke to him.[18] The Lord sometimes leads souls in this way to great things, at the same time allowing a certain repugnance to the fulfillment of the divine order to subsist.[11] If, on the contrary, God inspires humiliating things, He gives greater facility to accomplish them.[18]

These formal intellectual words are in themselves free from illusions, since the understanding cannot contribute anything to them, and the devil cannot act immediately on the intellect.[1*] Nevertheless his artifices may be taken for words of God, by confounding what immediately touches the intellect with what takes place in the imagination. "Consequently," says St. John of the Cross,[20] "what they say should not be immediately translated into action, nor should they be held in esteem no matter what their origin. It is indispensable to make them known to an experienced confessor or to a discreet and learned person. . . . If an experienced person is not to be found, the soul should keep whatever is substantial and sure in these words; disregard the rest; and speak of it to no one, lest a counselor be found who would do the soul more harm than good. The soul should not place itself at the mercy of anyone at all, for it is of prime importance whether one acts judiciously or is deceived in such matters."

Substantial intellectual words are formal locutions which effect

"Ibid.
18 Ibid.
18 Ibid., chap. 30.
18 Dan. 9:22.
1T Exod. 3:11.
18 The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Bk. II, chap. 30.
18 Cf. St. Thomas, la, q. in, a. 1, 3; q. 114, a. 1-4; la IIae, q.8o, a. 1-3; cf. Cardinal Bona, *De discretione spirituum,* chap. 17.
80 The Ascent of Mount Carmel, loc. cit.

immediately what they announce. We read in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel:*

For example, God says formally to a soul: Be good!, and instantly the soul becomes good. Or He says: Love Me!, and at once the soul possesses and experiences in itself true love of God. Or again He may say: Fear nothing!, and at that very instant, strength and peace come upon that soul. . . Thus, God said to Abraham: "Walk before Me, and be perfect," [21] and instantly perfection was given to him, and thenceforth he walked reverently before God. . . . A single one of these words instantly operates more good than the efforts of a lifetime. When the soul receives such locutions, it has only to abandon itself; it is useless to desire or not to desire them, for there is nothing to repulse, nothing to fear. The soul ought not even to seek to effect what is said, for God never utters substantial words in order that we should translate them into acts; He Himself brings about their effect. This is what distinguishes them from successive and formal locutions. . . . Illusion is not to be feared here, for neither the understanding nor the devil can interfere in this matter. . . . Substantial words are, therefore, a powerful means of union with God. . . . Happy the soul to which God addresses them.[22]

God's words are living flames in purified souls.[23]

Divine Touches

There is a fourth kind of favor which "frequently" [24] accompanies lofty infused contemplation, that is, divine touches, which are imprinted in the will and which "react on the intellect. . . . They give, thus, a very lofty and sweet intellectual penetration of God." [25] These touches are thereby attached to "particular and distinct contemplation." [26] They do not depend on the activity of the soul, or on its meditations, although these prepare the soul for them.

These divine touches are occasionally so deep and intense that they seem imprinted "in the very substance of the soul." How should this be understood? God, in fact, preserves the very substance of

11 Gen. 17:1.
12 *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. II, chap. 31.
22 *The Living Flame of Love,* st. 1, 1.
21 *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. II, chap. 32.
25 *Ibid.*
24 *Ibid.*

the soul in existence by a virtual contact, which is creation continued.[27] In it He also produces, preserves, and increases sanctifying grace, whence the infused virtues and the gifts spring.[28] He also moves the faculties, either by proposing an object to them, or by applying them to the exercise of their acts, and that from within.[29] The divine touch of which we are speaking is a supernatural motion of this type, but one of the most profound. It is exercised on the very depths of the will and of the intellect, where these faculties take root in the substance of the soul, whence they arise.[30]

Blosius, when explaining what Tauler calls the depth of the soul, tells us that it is the origin or the root of the higher faculties, *virium illarum est origo.sl* In truth, our will is, in a way, infinite in its profundity, in the sense that God alone can fill it; hence created goods cannot exercise an invincible attraction on it. It is free to love or not to love; only God seen face to face infallibly attracts it and captivates it, even to the very wellspring of its energies.[82] So-called substantial divine touches [33] affect this depth of the will and of the intellect. The very substance of the soul can operate, feel, perceive, and love only through its faculties; it has received them for that purpose. In this it differs from the divine substance, which alone, because God alone is pure Act, operates immediately by itself without having need of faculties.[34] But God, who is closer to the soul than it is to itself, inasmuch as He preserves it in existence, can from within touch and move the very foundation of the faculties by a contact, not spatial but spiritual *{contactus virtutis, non quantitativus),* which reveals itself as divine. Thus from within God moves the soul to the most profound acts, to which it could not move itself.

With this in mind, we understand why St. John of the Cross says on this subject:

27 Cf. St. Thomas, la, q.8, a. 1-3; q.43, a.3; q. 104, a.i, 2; q. 105, a.3, 4.
28 St. Thomas, la Ilae, q. 110, a. 3, 4.
29 *Ibid.,* q.9, a.4; q. 10, a. 1, 2, 4.
20 *Ibid.,* q. 113, a. 8, and *De veritate,* q.28, a. 3.
21 *Institutio spiritualis,* chap. 12.
22 *Summa,* la Ilae, q. 10, a. 2.
22 *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. II, chap. 32. Vallgornera, *Theol. myst. D. Thomae,* q. 3, disp. 5, a.9, nos. 1, 3, 4.
84Cf. St. Thomas, la, q.54, a.i: "Whether an angel's act of understanding is his substance." Cf. *ibia., a.i,* 3; q.77, a. 1, 2.

Nothing is more calculated to dissipate this delicate knowledge than the intervention of the natural spirit. Since it is a question of a sweet supernatural communication, it is useless to try to comprehend it actively, for that is impossible; the understanding has only to accept it. If, on the contrary, the soul seeks to provoke it or desires it, it may happen that what it conceives comes from itself, and thereby gives the devil the opportunity of presenting counterfeit knowledge. . . . Passive acceptance in humility is, therefore, incumbent on the soul. God grants these favors according to His good pleasure, and it is the humble and thoroughly detached soul that receives God's preference. By acting in this way, the progress of the soul suffers no interruption, and such knowledge serves efficaciously to advance it. These touches are touches of union serving to unite the soul passively to God."

This wholly intimate action of God on "the depths of the soul" is that in which everything terminates and, in a sense, that in which everything began, without our having been aware of it. This influence of the Holy Ghost on the depths of the soul, where He produced, preserves, and increases sanctifying grace, in fact precedes, without our knowing it, His influence on the faculties. The completely purified soul experiences this action in its very depths, when it has at length entered the sanctuary where God dwells and operates from the moment of justification. Therefore the great mystics have spoken so much of this depth of the soul and of this "substantial" action of God in which everything has its beginning, and at which everything terminates, when the soul reverts to its principle.[38] It is like a spiritual kiss imprinted by Christ, the Spouse of souls, on the depths of the will, which replies to Him with the most ardent love: "My Beloved to me, and I to Him." This divine touch is quite frequent in the transforming union or the spiritual marriage.

Evidently this favor of the divine touch, like many substantial words, is directly ordained to the sanctification of the person who receives it. It is, however, distinct from infused contemplation or from the mystical state, which it sometimes accompanies. Infused and obscure contemplation continues, in fact, when these touches, which are transitory, have ceased. The fact is that they are very

" *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* Bk. II, chap. 32; *The Dark Night,* Bk. II, chap. 23; *The Living Flame,* st. 2, v. 3.

" *The depths of the soul* is also occasionally called the *summit of the spirit,* when one considers sensible things, not only as exterior to the soul, but as very inferior to it.

sanctifying and may be more or less explicitly desired with the intimate union which they produce, but this desire should be humble and supernatural.§*

We must guard against confounding the mystical state (prolonged infused contemplation and the union with God which results from it) with extraordinary facts notably distinct from union. Neither should we lessen the mystical state by confounding it with fervent and simplified affective meditation, which is acquired and not infused. The mystical, or passive and infused, state begins with the passive recollection and prayer of quiet, described by St. Teresa in the fourth mansion. Neither should a chasm be interposed between the initial mystical state and the transforming union, described in the seventh mansion. This last mansion alone is, in this life, the culminating point of the development of grace, the virtues, and the gifts, and the immediate disposition to receive the beatific vision to which we are all called.

·' In *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* (Bk. II, chap. 26), St. John of the Cross says of "touches which are so strong and so profound that they penetrate into the inmost substance of the soul": "These touches savor of eternal life. . . . In regard to the other perceptions, we said that the soul should abstract itself from them, but this duty ceases before these, since they are the manifestations of that union to which we are trying to conduct the soul. All that we have taught previously on the subject of despoliation and of complete detachment was directed toward this union."

CHAPTER LVI

Stigmatization and Suggestion

IN recent years a study has again been made of the following problem: Can suggestion and autosuggestion produce the stigmata, that is, the marks of our Lord's passion, which a number of saints during ecstasy have received on their feet, hands, side, and forehead, with intense sufferings extraordinarily reminiscent of those of Christ crucified for us? These wounds appear without having been caused by any exterior wound, and periodically fresh blood flows from them. The first known stigmatic is St. Francis of Assisi. Since his day the cases have multiplied, but it seems certain that stigmatization occurs only in ecstatics and is preceded and accompanied by very acute physical and moral sufferings, which configure the soul to Jesus crucified. Can so exceptional a phenomenon be explained by suggestion in certain highly emotional subjects, as some unbelievers claim?

This question is examined at length by several physicians, psychologists, and theologians in the well documented number of the *Etudes cannélitaines* for October, 1936.[1]

Dr. Lhermitte, associate professor in the Medical School in Paris, offers a negative reply to this problem in an interesting report. He says:

> Even admitting that by hypnotic suggestion ecchymoses, vesicles and bloody sweats may be produced, can we say that the problem of stigmatization would be solved? . . . We cannot admit it. . . . Even though cutaneous ecchymoses were reproduced by pure suggestion, we would still have to produce symmetrical ecchymoses terminating in lasting

[1] This number of the *Etudes* contains the reports which were read and discussed during the conferences held on April 17-19, 1936, in the monastery of the Carmelites of Avon-Fontainebleau.

wounds, rebellious to infection and slow to heal. . . . Contrary to those who, under the cover of experimental science and of so-called positive facts, maintain that we can apprehend the processus of mystical stigmatization in one of its parts, we claim that, in spite of a few very deficient data given to us by experimentation and clinical research, we are as far from the explanation of the stigmata as in the days of Charcot, Bourneville, Bernheim, and Virchow.'

We know specifically that Pierre Janet tried unsuccessfully for long years to produce stigmata by hypnotic suggestion.

The opinion opposed to that of Professor Lhermitte is defended in the same number of the *Etudes* by Dr. van Gehuchten of the University of Louvain [8] and Dr. Wunderle of the University of Würzburg.[4] Both of them think that, under the influence of suggestion, local vasomotor manifestations may be produced which go so far as the formation of blisters and hemorrhages. Dr. Wunderle cites a case of this kind, produced by suggestion in a Protestant woman in Dr. Lechler's sanatarium in Germany.

The second of these opinions has, we believe, in its favor only confused and weak data, as Professor Lhermitte says.

The Traditional Teaching

In favor of the traditional doctrine, we are happy to point out here what Father Louis Sempé, S.J., wrote recently in an excellent article on this subject after the Congress of Avon-Fontainebleau.[5] We quote this article all the more willingly because it expresses very exactly what we ourselves would have wished to say had we taken part in the congress. We shall italicize what seems to us most important in it.

Father Sempé believed, though without reason, that we conceded conditionally (if the facts are exact) Dr. Wunderle's opinion. This impression was created by the manner in which Father Lavaud, O.P., of the University of Fribourg, in this same number of the *Etudes,*[9] expressed at one and the same time his own thought and our opin-

[3] *Etudes carmélitaines* (October, 1936), p. 71.
[8] *Ibid.,* p. 90.
[4] *Ibid.,* p. 158.
[5] "A propos d'un congrès sur la stigmatisation," *Messager du Sacré-Cœur* (May, 1937), pp. 286-96.
[9] *Etudes carmélitaines,* p. 191.

ion, forgetting to mention a traditional argument, which has always seemed to us very important and on which we shall insist at the end of this chapter.

Father Sempé justly remarks:

It is not that we deny to hypnotic suggestion the power to produce the effects that they tell us about. We would not dare a priori to concede it or to refuse it; let experience decide the matter. But, in our humble opinion, this is not the crux of the question. It is, so it seems to us, the fact that true stigmata, those of the saints, the only ones which the Church takes into consideration, are not in their entity wounds like the others. Beyond the fact that they are always *located in the same places in the body as they were in Christ* and occasionally attain the same dimensions as they did in Him, their behavior differentiates them *essentially,* we believe, from ordinary wounds.

To recall only their best verified characteristics, they are *as rebellious to all medication as they are inaccessible to corruption:* no dressing heals them, and they never suppurate, although frequently open and exposed to the air for years.† *They occasionally heal suddenly and perfectly,* to such a degree that the scar tissue is as elastic and strong as the surrounding skin, as pliable and resistant to pinching and twisting as the rest of the skin, though it is still possible to see the form and the dimensions of the wound underneath. . . . Finally, *true stigmata bleed periodically,* depending on the liturgical feasts of Christ and the Blessed Virgin.* They may bleed on the days to which some of these feasts have been transferred, contrary to the expectation of the subject who was unaware of the transference.

Are these not miraculous characteristics? But they point out nothing similar to us in connection with red spots, vésications, erosions, little drops of blood, obtained with so much trouble in certain neuropathic subjects by the aid of suggestion.'

It has also been occasionally observed that when the stigmatic is lying on his back, the blood flows from the wounds in his feet as it flowed from Christ's wounds, and therefore *in the direction contrary to gravity.*

The abundance of the hemorrhages is also unexplained. The stig-

† On the contrary, the smallest natural lesion on another part of the body brings suppuration, even in stigmatics. It should also be observed that the stigmata sometimes last for thirty and forty years.

* Or again on Friday.

* *Art. cit.,* pp. 291 ff.

mata are generally on the surface, far from the large blood vessels, and yet they bleed copiously.[10]

These physical particularities of stigmatic wounds differentiate them notably, in fact, from other wounds, as Dr. Lhermitte pointed out. And the description which is generally given of the stigmata of the saints presents these physical particularities and likewise the moral circumstances of this exceptional fact, notably the lively compassion for the sufferings of our Savior.

Special attention should be paid to the fact that the stigmata, properly so called, are found only in persons who practice the most heroic virtues, and who have in particular great love of the cross.

Stigmatics enter into the depths of the mystery of the redemption, into the secret of the moral and physical sufferings of Christ, or of His immolation for the salvation of sinners. Here is something that has no relation to the patients of clinics for nervous diseases. It is precisely to recall His dolorous passion to our indifferent minds and hearts that our Savior chooses victims whom He thus visibly or invisibly configures occasionally to His crucifixion.

To neglect this loftier aspect in stigmatization, in order to be able to explain this fact naturally, is to consider in it only the material cause while closing one's eyes to the formal cause and to the final cause, consequently to the true efficient cause. It is as if one defined

[10] See the case of St. Gemma Galgani and that of St. Veronica Guiliani, studied in the *Etudes carmélitaines* (October, 1936), pp. 196-204. See also Estrate, *Vie de Sœur Marie de Jésus-Crucifié* (2nd ed., Paris, 1916), pp. 36-42. For a more detailed account see *La Vie merveilleuse de Sœur Marie de Jésus-Crucifié* (3 vols., Carmel of Pau), p. 6. The former mistress of novices who assisted her during the sufferings or the stigmatization gives the following striking testimony: "Her hands were bathed in blood. I examined them carefully to see where it was coming from, but there was no trace of wounds or of a scratch. I then took a compress to bathe her forehead and, while doing so, I said interiorly: 'I beg Thee, O Lord, make me see where this blood is coming from, so that I can render testimony of this child.' And at the very instant there formed under my hands, a little above the right eyebrow, a hole which seemed to be made by a large thorn. From this hole gushed forth waves of blood. I continued to soak up the blood with a compress, but I noticed that the edges of this hole did not yield like those of an ordinary wound, and then it suddenly closed, or rather disappeared, leaving the skin smooth, without the slightest sign of a lesion. . . . Only the omnipotence of God could in a few moments wound and heal without leaving the slightest trace." On the preceding page, we read that "her feet also bled. The ampulla disappeared and a hole formed which pierced through to the other side of the foot." It then healed suddenly.

a statue solely by the wood or marble of which it is made, prescinding from its form, its true end, and the artist who had this end in view. To explain the superior by the inferior, naturalism should, like materialism, reduce the superior to its material cause, that is to say, disfigure it to the point of making it unrecognizable. The natural ecchymoses of which we are speaking resemble true stigmata as glass beads resemble diamonds.

Moreover, just as to judge well of a human act, of its meaning, and its import, one must be attentive to its circumstances, each of which theologians study in particular and enumerate in the well-known expression: *Quis, quid, ubi, quibus auxiliis, cur, quomodo, quando,*[11] so to judge rightly of the meaning and import of an exceptional fact like stigmatization, one should most attentively note its physical and moral circumstances. Special attention should be paid to those related to the stigmatic's end *{cur),* manifested either before, by a prayer or a promise, or afterward, by the effects, by a great love of the cross; those relating to the object *(quid'),* for example, the corporeal wounds produce keen physical suffering accompanied by a delicious spiritual wound, which, as St. Teresa [12] and St. John of the Cross [13] say, can come only from God; those relating to the person *(quis),* which consist in the fact that he is humble, obedient, animated by a great charity; those relative to the means *(quibis auxiliis),* by the exclusion of all clever trickery and occultism; lastly, those relative to the time and the place *(ubi et quando).*

If all these circumstances are favorable, one may have moral certitude of the supernatural origin of the stigmata. It is evident that it is not a question of a pathological fact, but that there is in the case the intervention of a free and intelligent cause which acts on the stigmatics to configure them to Jesus crucified.

Finally, God alone can produce what is most lofty in stigmatization: the spiritual wound of the heart, which St. Teresa speaks of in the sixth mansion.[14] This wound, which has as its effect an ardent desire for God and a great love of the cross, attains the most intimate depth of the spiritual will; therefore it can come only from

[11] Cf. St. Thomas, la Ilae, q.7, a.3.
[14] *The Interior Castle,* sixth mansion, chap. 11.
[14] *The Living Flame,* st. 2, v. 2.
[14] *The Interior Castle,* sixth mansion, chap. 11.

God. It is at one and the same time most painful and delightful, and, as St. Teresa says, the soul would wish never to recover from it.[18]

Ecstasy and Stigmatization

A study has recently been made again as to whether great supernatural compassion for the sufferings of our Savior, intensified by ecstasy, may have as a natural result the corporeal stigmata.

St. Francis de Sales replies in the negative to this question in his *Treatise on the Love of God,* where he says: "Love has wonderful power to sharpen the imagination, so that it may penetrate even to the exterior. . . . But the love which was within [St. Francis of Assisi] simply could not produce openings in the flesh on the exterior. That is why the burning seraphim, coming to its help, darted at the saint rays of such penetrating light that it actually pierced the flesh with the exterior wounds of the Crucified which love had imprinted interiorly on the soul." [18]

The reply given by St. Francis de Sales is confirmed by the following traditional argument quoted by Benedict XIV.[17] Many men and women saints of widely different temperaments have had a very intense supernatural compassion for the sufferings of our Savior, and have not had the stigmata, which appear for the first time in the thirteenth century in St. Francis of Assisi. No one has ever affirmed that the Blessed Virgin, St. Mary Magdalen, or St. John the Evangelist had these divine corporeal wounds, and yet who more greatly compassionated the sufferings of Jesus crucified? Likewise, since the thirteenth century, many men and women saints, of widely divergent temperaments, with or without ecstasy, have had this lively supernatural compassion without having the stigmata. Among them are even great mystics, like St. John of the Cross, who have had a lofty degree of infused contemplation, accompanied by ecstasy and even the spiritual wound of the heart.

Does this not prove that the stigmata are not the natural consequence of lively supernatural compassion, and that ardent love does

[18] *Ibid.* On the wound of love, see also St. John of the Cross, *The Living Flame,* st. 2, v. 1, and Father Gabriel of St. Magdalen, C.D., "L'Ecole thérésienne et les blessures d'amour mystique," *Etudes carmélitaines,* October, 1936, p. 208.

[18] Bk. VI, chap. ij.

[17] De *servorum Dei beatificatione,* Bk. IV, part I, chap. 33, nos. 13, 19.

not suffice to produce them? Such is the conclusion of Bartholomew of Pisa and, after him, of Theophilus Raynaud, of Benedict XIV,[18] as opposed to Francesco Petrarch and Pomponazzi. This traditional argument is undoubtedly quite general, but in our opinion it preserves all its value. In recent discussions, it was not sufficiently examined and nothing was adduced that could weaken it.

In the number of the *Etudes carmélitaines* already mentioned, Dom Aloysius Mager, O.S.B., dean of the Faculty of Theology of Salzburg, and Dr. Wunderle, of Würzburg, strongly incline to consider stigmatization as the ideoplastic contrecoup on the organism of the infused contemplation of Jesus crucified. In their opinion it would, thanks to the power of the imagination, be a natural result of a great supernatural compassion. As the apprehension of blushing makes one blush, the imagination united to a lively supernatural emotion could produce corporeal stigmata. This is a return to the ideoplastic theory which St. Francis de Sales rejected. What is it worth?

Father Sempé, in the article we quoted, offers a just criticism of this explanation:

> In the first place, this theory, since it is basically autosuggestion, supposes that there is always at the origin of the stigmata the two necessary factors of autosuggestion, that is, an extremely vivid representation of Jesus crucified coupled with a profound compassion for His sufferings and an ardent desire to receive these wounds. Now, these necessary factors do not, however, always exist. Among the best characterized and most authentic cases of stigmatization, there are some in which the subject did not desire, imagine, or even suspect as possible the impression on his flesh of the wounds of the Crucified. Indeed, a number of stigmatics have even begged Christ to spare them these exterior marks, and their prayer was not granted.
>
> In conformity with the exigencies of this theory, its proponents also assume that the stigmatic pain precedes the exterior wound. Such is not always the fact. There are cases in which the subject at first felt no local pain, and never even thought of the stigmata. The wounds were made on his body from the exterior by a blinding blow of luminous rays, and immediately the pains, extremely sharp pains, began. . . .
>
> But if it is the luminous rays which cause the wound, why bring in, by dint of hypotheses, the ideoplastic power of the imagination? Would not

[18] *Loc. cit.*

this psychological instrument be unnecessary since the rays exist? Does not the scientific method demand economy? [18]

Theologians have often asked how it is that the majority of stigmatics received the divine wounds without suggestion or autosuggestion, without expecting them, and without wishing them?

Blessed Raymond of Capua relates in his *Life of St. Catherine of Siena,*[20] that on August 18, 1370, the saint received the stigmata in an altogether unexpected manner following a prayer and a divine promise of the salvation of several persons; stigmatization was produced to confirm this promise. The absolutely unforeseen pain was as sharp as if her hand had been pierced with an iron nail driven by a hammer. At the petition of the saint, the stigmata remained invisible during her life. Later in the presence of several witnesses worthy of credence, the supernatural renewal of the fact took place with such effect that the saint swooned suddenly before their eyes, as if she had been mortally wounded. The fact and its supernatural origin are, moreover, attested by the saint, and her testimony is confirmed by the humility of her entire life, which led her to ask and obtain immediately the invisibility of this exceptional favor. In this case we see how all the physical and moral circumstances of the fact confirm its origin.

Thus we return to the explanation offered by St. Francis de Sales, which seems the wisest. It is our crucified Lord Himself who, by means of luminous rays, imprints the wounds on the bodies of stigmatics, whom He wishes to configure to His passion that He may remind us of it. Evidently the traditional argument of Bartholomew of Pisa, preserved by Benedict XIV, retains all its value. To sum it up again: Many men and women saints, of widely different temperaments, have been absorbed with ardent love in the infused contemplation of the sufferings of Christ and, nevertheless, they have not had the stigmata. Among them must be numbered the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. John the Evangelist, St. Mary Magdalen, and many others prior to St. Francis of Assisi, the first stigmatic, and many others subsequent to him. This is a sign that ardent love,

[19] *Art. cit.,* p. 294. Moreover, these rays appeared in either an imaginary or a corporeal vision, and they manifest the divine action which produces these corporeal wounds. On the comparison of these facts with morbid phenomena and diabolical manifestations, see *infra* chaps. 57, 58.

[20] Part II, chap. 6.

united to infused contemplation, does not suffice to produce the stigmata. Christ Jesus grants them to whom He will, when He will, and as He will. Stigmatization is an essentially extraordinary grace that is not in the normal way of sanctity.

Levitation

By levitation is understood the phenomenon of the elevation of the human body above the ground without any apparent cause and in such a way that it remains in the air without any natural support. This phenomenon is also called ascensional ecstasy, ecstatic flight, or ecstatic walking when the body seems to run rapidly without touching the ground.

The Bollandists relate numerous cases of levitation. They cite particularly those attested in the lives of St. Joseph of Cupertino (September 18), St. Philip Neri (May 26), St. Peter of Alcantara (October 19), St. Francis Xavier (December 3), St. Stephen of Hungary (September 2), St. Paul of the Cross (April 28), and others. It is related that St. Joseph of Cupertino, seeing some workmen having trouble in trying to put up a very heavy mission cross, took his aerial flight, seized the cross, and without effort placed it in the hole destined for it.

In contradistinction to levitation, they cite cases of extraordinary weight of the bodies of certain saints: for example, when an attempt was made to violate and drag St. Lucy of Syracuse to a place of debauchery, her body remained fixed to the earth like the pillar of a church.

Suggestion or autosuggestion of hysterical persons has never been able to provoke levitation. After an examination extending over several years, Professor Janet of Paris was able to establish that the body of the person was never raised, even a millimeter, even sufficiently to slip a cigarette paper between his feet and the ground.[21]

Rationalists have tried to explain naturally the levitation proved in the case of several saints by the deep breathing of air into the

[21] Everybody knows the promises made by Pierre Janet's patient, Madeleine, that she would be lifted into the air like the Blessed Virgin on the feast of the Assumption; she never rose at all. Dr. P. Janet discusses this case at length in his work: *De l'angoisse à l'extase* (Paris, 1926), "Sentiment de lévitation," 1, 98, 146f.

Levitation has never been proved at the Salpétrière.

lungs; but, in the face of the manifest insufficiency of this reason, they have had to have recourse to an unknown psychic power—an explanation that is merely so many words.

Benedict XIV states the traditional and reasonable explanation.[22] He requires first of all that the fact be well proved in order to avoid all trickery. Then he shows: (1) that because of the law of gravity, well-proved levitation cannot be naturally explained; (2) that it does not, however, exceed the powers of angels and the devil, who can lift bodies up; (3) that consequently the physical, moral, and religious circumstances of the fact must be carefully examined to see whether there is not diabolical intervention; and that, when the circumstances are favorable, one can and must see in it a divine or angelic intervention, which grants to the bodies of the saints an anticipation of the gift of agility which is proper to glorified bodies.

Luminous Effluvia

Ecstatics occasionally present luminous phenomena; the body is enveloped in light, and in particular the forehead. Benedict XIV examines this fact as he does that of levitation.[23] He points out that one must make sure whether the phenomenon can be explained naturally: at what time of the day or of the night it is produced; whether the light is more brilliant than any other; whether the phenomenon is prolonged for a notable length of time and renewed several times. Particular attention must also be paid to the moral and religious circumstances: whether the phenomenon is produced during a sermon, a prayer, an ecstasy; whether effects of grace, lasting conversions, and so on, result from it; whether the person from whom this light comes is virtuous and holy. If all these attentively examined conditions exist, as it were an anticipation of the brightness of glorified bodies may be seen in this exceptional fact.[24]

Fragrant Effluvia

During the lifetime of the saints or after their death, their bodies occasionally give off perfumes. The faithful have always seen in

[22] *De beatificatione,* Bk. III, chap. 49.
[23] *Op. cit.,* Bk. IV, part I, chap. 26, nos. 8-30.
[24] On this subject, see Ribet, *La Mystique,* Part II, chap. 29.

this fact a sign of the good odor of the virtues they practiced. This fact has often been proved; in particular the stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi gave off a sweet odor. When St. Teresa died, the water with which her body was washed became perfumed. When, long after his death, the tomb of St. Dominic was opened, his perfectly preserved body exhaled a celestial odor.

To make sure of the supernatural character of the fact, it should be ascertained whether the sweet odor endures, whether anything near the body can explain it naturally, whether effects of grace result from this exceptional phenomenon.[26]

Prolonged Abstinence

Lastly, there are saints, especially among the stigmatics, who have lived for months and even years without taking any other food than the Blessed Eucharist. Notable examples of this fact are St. Catherine of Siena, St. Lidwina, Blessed Catherine Racconigi, Blessed Angela of Foligno, and St. Nicholas of Fliie.

On this subject Benedict XIV [26] says that the fact must be attentively examined over a considerable length of time by constant surveillance, and by recourse to numerous witnesses expert in detecting trickery. An examination must be made to determine whether abstinence is total and extends to liquid food as well as to solid nourishment, whether it is lasting, and whether the person continues to devote himself to his occupations. Under such conditions the fact cannot be explained naturally.

The same thing must be said of very prolonged lack of sleep, such as has been proved, for example, in the lives of St. Peter of Alcantara, St. Dominic, and St. Catherine de Ricci.

In these divers exceptional phenomena, after extensive examination of the fact itself, of its physical, moral, and religious circumstances, one sees that the body, far from weighing down the soul, as happens only too often, becomes the instrument of the soul whose spiritual beauty, infused light, and ardent love it allows to shine through. These outward signs are given us from time to time to show us, even in a sensible manner, that perfect Christian life is the prelude of eternal life.

[26] Cf. Benedict XIV, *op. cit.,* Bk. IV, part I, chap, ji, nos. 19-18.
[26] *Op. cit.,* Bk. IV, part I, chap. 17.

These exceptional phenomena, when superficially examined, are like a stained-glass window in a church seen from without; from the exterior, their meaning and import cannot be grasped. But, when examined more attentively in the twofold light of right reason and faith, they resemble a stained-glass window seen from within under its true light; then all their beauty can be appreciated. We see this particularly when we permeate our souls with the liturgy for the feasts of the stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi and of St. Catherine of Siena. The prayers of the Mass and the Office for these two feasts are of a rare splendor, like those for the Mass of the transverberation of St. Teresa.

To enkindle love for Jesus crucified in the hearts of the faithful, Paul V extended the feast of the stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi (September 17) to the universal Church. The prayer for the Mass is as follows: "Lord Jesus, who at a time when charity was growing cold in the world, to enkindle our hearts with the fire of Thy love, didst renew the sacred stigmata of Thy passion in the flesh of the Blessed Francis, grant us, in Thy goodness, that by his merits and prayers, we may continually bear the cross and bring forth worthy fruits of penance. Thou who livest," and so on. In this prayer we see the great realism of the Church, which to the highest elevation of thought unites the effective practice of all the virtues.[27]

*' On stigmatization, see the article "Stigmates de saint François," *Dictionnaire apologétique de la foi catholique,* and the principal lives of St. Francis of Assisi and of St. Catherine of Siena; cf. also the Bollandists. See also O. Leroy, *La Lévitation* (Paris, 1932); "La splendeur corporelle des saints," *La Vie spirituelle,* supplement, October, December, 1935, January, 1936; "La multiplication miraculeuse des biens," *ibid.,* August, 1937, April, 1938.

CHAPTER LVII

Differences Between Extraordinary Divine Facts and Morbid Phenomena

THE extraordinary facts discussed in the preceding chapter, particularly stigmatization, levitation, and so on, which occasionally accompany ecstasy are so well proved that positivists cannot deny their existence. They try, however, to liken them to certain morbid phenomena proceeding from psychoneuroses, especially hysteria.

The saints are, as a matter of fact, subject, like other men, to illness; but we are concerned with discovering whether, in spite of their maladies, they are mentally sane and well balanced.[1]

We shall point out here, as many psychologists and theologians have already done, the differences: (1) on the part of the subject; (2) on the part of the phenomena; (3) on the part of the effects. After these general remarks, we shall indicate by some examples how to proceed to the examination of certain particular facts.

1 On this subject, see the studies of Dr. Pierre Janet, *L'Automatisme psychologique* (10th ed., 1930), Part II, chaps. 3 f.; *De l'angoisse à l'extase,* 1926; *La Médecine psychologique,* 1928. Cf. also Dr. E. Régis, *Précis de psychiatrie,* (6th ed., 1926), in particular on hysteria, pp. 954-66. Robert de Sinéty, S.J., *Psychopathologie et direction,* 1934. A. Poulain, S.J., *Des Graces d'oraison* (10th ed., 1922), Part III, chap. 18; Part IV, chap. 21. Msgr. A. Saudreau, *L'Etat mystique, sa nature et ses phases* (2nd ed., 1921), chap. 17. G. Rabeau, "Théologie mystique et psychiatrie," *La Vie spirituelle* (suppl.), June 1935; and in the same issue an article by Dr. H. Ey, "La notion de psychopathologie dans ses rapports avec les problèmes mystiques." *J.* de Tonquédec, S.J., "Anormaux" (sanctification des), *Diet, de spiritualité,* I, col. 678-89. Dr. Biot, "Les maladies nerveuses et mentales," *Ami du clergé* (1939), no. 2, pp. 17-27.

Differences on the Part of the Subject

Patients afflicted with psychoneuroses are unbalanced from a mental point of view, whereas true mystics and ecstatics manifest perfect moral equilibrium.

Dr. E. Régis thus characterizes the mentality of hysterical subjects:

> Many hysterical subjects have a distinctive mental state, easily recognizable. From early youth, future hysterical subjects—for we are speaking here especially of hysterical members of the feminine sex—stand out by reason of particular characteristics. In the majority of cases, they are girls of intellectual brilliancy, precocious in the extreme, impressionable, coquettes, seeking to draw attention to themselves, clever in feigning and lying, subject, moreover, to nocturnal terrors, dreams, and nightmares. Hysteria once established, the mental and moral state of its tributaries is characterized principally, where the intellect is concerned, by an excessive mobility, which makes the patients incapable of perseverance and of any stable idea; . . . they are absolutely incapable of succeeding in any serious endeavor. In addition, they have a very manifest tendency to contradiction, controversy, paradoxical ideas . . . likewise to imitation, suggestion, and autosuggestion. Morally the state is the same: a bizarre, capricious, fantastic, immoderately mobile character; . . . duplicity, untruthfulness, cleverness in simulating, deceiving, inventing; brusque and untimely propensity to the most perverse acts, as well as to most meritorious actions of bravery and display; continual need to make a spectacle of themselves, and so on.[2] Then come subconscious fixed ideas, hallucinations even outside of any delirium properly so called, attacks with delirium, finally mental deterioration and madness.

It is evident that mental disturbance is increasingly accentuated, the intellect directs the patient's conduct less and less, the memory splits, sometimes to the extent that the patient believes that he has two personalities; soon there is nothing left in the mind except a small number of fixed ideas; whence arises a certain mono-ideism bordering on madness. With the diminution of the intellect, goes the weakening of the will; the emotions get the upper hand, gradually the personality disappears, and caprice dominates.[3]

In true mystics and ecstatics, on the contrary, it has been estab-

[2] *Op. cit.,* p. 955.

[3] Cf. P. Janet, *L'Automatisme psychologique,* Part II, chaps. 3 f.

lished that their intellect grows through their knowledge of God, the divine perfections, the dogmas of faith, and also through their profound knowledge of themselves. They declare that in a few moments of contemplation they learn more than by reading all books on the interior life. In these moments they receive a higher light which makes them glimpse, as it were, a superior synthesis of all they already knew, a living, luminous synthesis which, arousing the impulse of the will, makes them undertake and carry out great things with admirable, persevering courage in spite of almost unbelievable difficulties. The lives of St. Catherine of Siena and of St. Teresa illustrate this fact.

In addition, true mystics are humble, charitable, submissive to the divine will amid even the greatest trials. In them is patent the connection and the harmony of the most dissimilar virtues, and, dominating all, a love of God and of neighbor and a wisdom that give them peace and wonderful serenity. Properly speaking, they represent the inverse of the passionate agitation and inconstancy of hysterical subjects. This fact is evident in their labors for the successful prosecution of a difficult undertaking; likewise their perseverance in good, their constant love of the truth, united to reserve and humility, give proof of it.

Differences on the Part of the Phenomena

No less difference exists between true ecstasy and what has been called hysterical ecstasy. It suffices to have assisted once or twice at this latter manifestation in hospitals to see that there is no resemblance whatever between the two.

In attacks of hysteria, as Dr. E. Régis says,[4] there is a delirium of illusion, clearly hallucinatory in character or marked by memories or lengthy monologues. Fundamentally it is one and the same delirium, but corresponding to different degrees of depth of the illusion. The first phase of the crisis resembles a light attack of epilepsy, but is distinguished from it by the sensation of a ball that rises in the throat; the person experiences a feeling of suffocation, which comes from the swelling of the throat. The second phase consists in inordinate gestures, contortions of the whole body, especially in

[4] *Op. cit.,* p. 960.

arched circles. The third is that of passional attitudes of fright, jealousy, lubricity in relation to the obsessing image. The crisis ends by attacks of tears or of laughter, which relax the patient. On coming out of these crises, the subjects are exhausted. In short, there are different phases, epileptoid, clownish, plastic, and passional (called hysterical ecstasy), the crisis terminating in exhaustion of the body, dulling of the mind, collapse of the whole being.

In true ecstasy, on the contrary, there are no convulsions, violent agitation, passional attitudes of fright, jealousy, and so on; there is calm, the rapture of a soul profoundly united to God by one of those passive recollections which God alone can give and which considerably surpass the recollection that proceeds from our personal effort of concentration. There is absolutely no relation between so-called hysterical ecstasy and the ecstasy, for example, of Bernadette during the apparitions of Lourdes. In a real ecstasy there is no morbid excitation, no strange agitation, no entirely physical delectation, followed by depression. Ecstasy is the movement of the whole being, both body and soul, toward the divine object present in the imagination or intellect. Ecstasy ends in the calm return to the natural state, with simple regret over the disappearance of the celestial vision and the wholly spiritual joy that it gave. St. Teresa even points out in her *Life* [5] that this state, which should weaken the body, on the contrary, gives it new strength.

Differences in the Effects

These differences are more and more marked. In hysterical subjects when the crises increase, the unbalanced mental condition grows and with it dissimulation, lying, brutalization, lascivity, and finally capricious sensuality completely dominates the intellect and will. If mono-ideism is present, it springs from the disorganization and disintegration of the personality, and from mental confusion which leads to madness.

In true mystics and ecstatics, on the other hand, there is a growing development of the understanding of divine things, of those of the interior life, of the life of the Church, of all that touches on the salvation or the loss of souls. There is likewise a steady increase in the love of God and in devotion to their neighbor, as shown by the

[5] Chaps. 18, 10.

works they undertake and often bring to success, to such a degree that their foundations last for centuries.

St. Francis of Assisi, the stigmatic of Alvemia, founded in the thirteenth century a religious order that is still one of the most numerous in the Church. St. Thomas Aquinas, during his ecstasies, dictated whole chapters on the mystery of the Blessed Trinity and saw from a superior point of view the entire synthesis of theological science.

St. Catherine of Siena, who died at the age of thirty-two and who for a long time could neither read nor write, played a role of primary importance in the affairs of her day, particularly in the return of the popes to Rome.

In spite of opposition on the part of many, St. Teresa founded before her death sixteen convents for women and fourteen for men.

If in hysterical subjects there is mono-ideism (for lack of other ideas), for example, the fixed idea of suicide, in true mystics there is one great idea which subordinates all others to itself in perfect harmony; in other words, the thought of God, of His immense goodness toward us and the profound and radiating conviction that we must correspond to His love. It is not the disintegration of the elements of a man's personality; rather it is their perfect subordination according to the very order of charity: God loved above all else, then souls to be saved. This is why, even from the human point of view, as a number of unbelieving psychologists have recognized, the saints are great organizers. Although an unbeliever, De Montmorand writes on this subject: "True mystics are people of experience and action, not of reasoning and theory. They have the sense of organization, the gift of commanding, and reveal themselves well endowed for business. The works that they found are capable of surviving and enduring; in the conception and direction of their enterprises, they give proof of prudence, of daring, and of that just appreciation of possibilities which characterizes good sense. And, as a matter of fact, good sense seems to be their fundamental quality; good sense untroubled by an unhealthy exaltation and a disordered imagination, and coupled with the most unusual power of penetration." * This we see exemplified in St. Paul, St. Augustine,

* *Psychologie des mystiques* (1920), pp. 20f.

St. Bernard, St. Dominic, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, St. Teresa, and so many others.7

An Examination of Some Particular Facts

Occasionally in the lives of mystics and ecstatics we find evidence of a given fact that might suggest the hypothesis of hysteria. We shall give an example of blindness which we have studied particularly. It is known that functional blindness and even temporary paralysis are occasionally found in hysteria and may last even beyond the crisis and for a long time.

In Father Estrate's life of the Arabian Carmelite, Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified,8 we read that in her youth in the Orient the servant of God was stricken with blindness which lasted forty days, that she recovered her sight instantaneously after a prayer to the Blessed Virgin, and that at the moment of her cure she felt something fall from her eyes. In another life of the same Carmelite,® the fact is reported in an identical manner. Is this blindness for forty days a sign of hysteria in this Carmelite who had frequent ecstasies accompanied by levitation?

To answer this question and every other one of the same kind, the moral and physical qualities of the subject should first be examined. In the case under discussion, the constitution of the servant of God was healthy and even strong; her corpulence and the incessant work she performed do not permit us to classify her among neuropaths or among psychopaths. No functional malady was observed in her. Moreover, she never had the signs of typical hysteria, or the precursory symptoms, or the crises with epileptoid, clownish, plastic, passional phases, or delirium followed by physical exhaustion. Instead of discovering inconstancy or untruthfulness in her, one sees perseverance in good, love of the truth, purity, reserve, and humility. Should the fact of this forty-day blindness, nevertheless, be attributed to hysteria? Is it a symptom of this malady?

TCf. H. Bergson, *Les Deux sources de la morale et de la religion* (1932), pp. 228, 235, 256.

«Estrate, *Vie de Sœur Marie de Jésus-Crucifié, carmélite arabe* (2nd ed., 1816), p. 18.

8Buzy, *Vie de Sœur Marie de Jésus-Crucifié, carmélite arabe* (1927), pp. 29 ff.

On this subject we shall make a few observations which are applicable to several similar facts:

1. The nature of hysteria is not yet well known; some see a neurosis in it, others a psychosis, others the two at once, to such a degree that Professor Lassègue, of the Paris Academy of Medicine, said, as reported in *L'Ami du clergé:* "The definition of hysteria has never been given, and it is possible that it never will be. . . . It is a basket into which people throw the papers that they do not know how to classify." [10] Since this malady has not yet been sufficiently defined, it has not as yet, properly speaking, differential symptoms, such, for example, as Koch's bacillus for tuberculosis. What seems to be fixed is the form of the hysterical crisis, with its precursory symptoms and the different phases of the crisis. Blindness is occasionally, but not always, found in it; therefore, among the signs of this malady that are customarily cited, it is not a cardinal symptom.

2. Moreover, blindness occurred only once in the life of the servant of God of whom we are speaking.

3. She has not one of the peculiar symptoms of hysteria, not any of the precursory symptoms, not any of the phases of the crisis. In the syndrome of these symptoms, blindness would have contributed to proving something; without them, it proves nothing.

4. On the other hand, the particular cadre of Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified harmonizes sufficiently with that of mystical ecstasy described by St. Teresa.

5. Persons least favorably inclined to the servant of God never said that she was hysterical. A doctor at Pau who had suspected this malady and sought to make sure of it, one day witnessed her extraordinary state and admitted that it was ecstasy.

All these observations show that the temporary blindness of which we are speaking did not originate in hysteria.

6. There is a confirmation of our opinion in the reasons which lead to the conclusion that it was an organic malady. It occurred, in fact, in the Orient where blind persons are notably more numerous than elsewhere because of the brilliant glare of the sun, the whiteness of the earth, the calcareous dust carried by the wind, the coolness of the nights and the fact that people sleep on the flat

[10] *L'Ami du clergé* (1914), p. 82.

roofs, and finally because of the lack of hygiene, because of flies and other insects.[11]

7. There is a final reason, and one not to be disregarded, related by the two above-mentioned biographers of the servant of God, namely, that at the moment when her blindness was cured "she felt that something fell from her eyes." This same remark is made by those who are cured of organic blindness caused by leucoma (albugo), well known in pathology, that is, the yellowish spot which forms between the layers of the cornea in several inflammations of the eyeball or of one of its parts.

These different reasons lead us to think that blindness in this case is organic and not functional, and consequently not hysterical.

Particular facts, more or less similar to this case, may be examined in the same way by considering, first of all, the qualities of the subject and the particular details of the fact itself, to see whether or not it is related to one or another symptom of hysteria or of some other psychoneurosis.[12]

The director will be able and sometimes will be obliged to consult a competent physician. An attentive examination, well conducted from both the medical and the spiritual point of view, will often give moral certitude, especially if it is accompanied by prayer, great disinterestedness, and perfect purity of intention in the search for truth.

Note

In the "Congress on Religious Psychology" of Avon-Fontainebleau (September 21-22, 1938), the reports of which are assembled in the *Etudes carmélitaines* (October, 1938), the following question was raised: "In what measure are sanctity and lofty mystical life compatible with pathological disturbances?" Father Bruno, who organized the Congress, believed that the entire result could be

[11] Cf. "Aveugles," *Diet, de la Bible,* col. 1289.

[12] It should also be pointed out, as Dr. Régis observes *(op. cit.,* pp. 697-99: "Psychopathic states resulting from hyperfunction of the thyroid"), that diseases like Basedow's have symptoms which recall those of hysteria; but "when psychic disturbances arise through crises corresponding to Basedowian pressures, the diagnosis cannot be doubtful" *(ibid.).*

In the same work (pp. 700 ff.) cf. the article on endocrinian autointoxications.

summed up in the following proposition: "Theologians and doctors who were consulted believe possible the concomitance of normal mystical life and of certain psychopathological states not to be identified with insanity. However, it appears that definitive and incrustating anomalies are not compatible with regular mystical elevation." In accord with Father de Guibert and Father de Tonquédec, we admit this proposition with some reservations. During the same Congress, Doctor A. Delmas, who also admits the possibility of a lofty interior life in lucid moments for a cyclothymic like Father Surin, declared that nevertheless true hysteria does not seem to him compatible with an eminent moral life; such a state would constitute a veritable enigma.[13]

The articles of Dr. Biot on these questions may be read with profit.[14]

[13] Cf. *Etudes carmélitaines* (October, 1938), pp. 188 ff., 235-39.

[14] "Quelques notions élémentaires sur les maladies nerveuses et mentales," *L'Ami du clergé* (1939), pp. 7-27. After having distinguished the organic maladies of the nervous system from nervous diseases, he divides the latter into neuroses, psychoneuroses, and psychoses.

Neuroses which attack the nervous system from the functional point of view are epilepsy, Basedow's disease, and the diseases of the endocrine glands, neurasthenia, one of the symptoms of which is asthenia, a notable loss of strength.

Psychoneuroses include hyperemotivity, with its manifestations: anxiety; psychasthenia, which is manifested by obsession, scruples; the mythomania of false ecstatics, false visionaries, false stigmatics.

Psychoses, which peculiarly affect mental activity, have diverse forms: melancholia, mania, cyclothymia (manias or melancholy returning in cycles), hallucinations, delirium, which show the disintegration of the personality, whereas unity through the subordination and coordination of ideas, feelings, and voluntary acts, is the sign of mental health.

CHAPTER LVIII

Diabolical Phenomena[1]

THE persecutions of the devil comprise all that one may have to suffer from him: temptations, obsession, possession. On this subject we must recall, first of all, the theological principle which throws light on these problems: the action of the devil does not go beyond the sensible part of the soul and cannot be exercised immediately on the intellect or the will.

St. Thomas[2] says in substance that, since every agent acts for an end which is proportionate to it, the order or subordination of agents corresponds to the order of the ends. God alone can incline our intellect to universal truth and our will to the universal good, and finally to Himself, the Sovereign Good. Therefore He alone can act immediately on our intellect and will, according to their natural inclination, which comes from Him and which He preserves. *Solus Deus illabitur in anima.*

With the permission of God, however, the devil can attack us by acting on our imagination, our sensibility, on external objects, and on our body to incline us to evil.[3] He often limits himself to temptation by way of suggestion and more or less impetuous movements; but occasionally his action goes as far as obsession and in certain cases even to possession.

In these matters two excesses must be avoided: attribution to the devil of what proceeds from the triple concupiscence or from cer-

1 Cf. Ribet, *Mystique divine,* Vol. Ill, chap, io; A. Poulain, S.J., *Des Graces d'oraison* (10th ed.), chap. 24, 7-8, 59-89; A. Saudreau, *L'Etat mystique* (2nd ed., 1921), chaps. 22 f; "Possession," *Dictionnaire apologétique,* also *Diet, théol. cath.;* J. de Tonquédec, S.J., *Les Maladies nerveuses ou mentales et les manifestations diaboliques* (Paris, 1938).

2 *Summa,* la, q. 105, a.4; la Ilae, q. 109, a.6.

• *Ibid.,* la Ilae, q.8o, "Of the cause of sin, as regards the devil"; Ia. q. 114, "Of the assault» of the demons."

tain morbid states, or, on the contrary, unwillingness to admit his intervention in any case, in spite of what Scripture and tradition tell us about it.

We shall sum up here the traditional teaching on obsession and possession.

Obsession

Obsession is a series of temptations that are more violent and prolonged than ordinary temptations. Rarely does the devil act only on the exterior senses; more frequently, through the imagination, he provokes lively impressions of the sensible appetites in order to trouble the soul. He may act on the sight by loathsome apparitions or, on the contrary, seductive apparitions;[4] on the hearing, by making a racket[5] or by making the person hear blasphemous or obscene words;[6] on the touch, by inflicting blows or by embraces of a nature to lead to evil.[7] There are cases in which these apparitions are not corporeal, but imaginary or produced, like hallucination, by nervous overexcitement.

The direct action of the devil on the imagination, memory, and passions, may produce obsessing images, which persist in spite of energetic efforts and which lead to anger, to very lively antipathies, or to dangerous affections, or again to discouragement accompanied by anguish. Those whom the enemy of good persecutes in this way feel at times that their imagination is as if bound by thick shadows, and that over their heart rests a weight which oppresses them. This powerlessness is entirely different from that proceeding from the divine action which, in bestowing infused contemplation, renders discursive meditation more or less impracticable. The enemy of God, in his jealous desire to imitate the divine action, seeks to cause the effect of God's action to deviate, in such a way that, in the passive purifications, the soul occasionally finds itself between the special action of God, which inclines it to a spiritual life more freed from the senses, and an inverse action, which in its way strikes it

[4] Cf. A. Poulain, S.J., *op. cit.* chap. 24, no. 94.

[5] A. Monnin, *Le Curé d'Ars,* Bk. III, chap. 11.

[6] "Blessed Margaret of Cortona," Bollandists (February, 22), VI, p. 370, no. 178.

[7] A. Poulain, S.J., *loc. cit.*

with powerlessness in order to cause the effect of the divine action to deviate and to throw the soul into utter confusion.

If the temptations of which we are speaking are sudden, violent, and persistent, and no illness explains them, a special influence of the devil may be seen in them.

Obsession may be so strong that it deserves the name of diabolical siege. Scaramelli says: "In the diabolical siege, the devil stays near the person whom he besieges as a captain does near a place which he surrounds closely with his troops. But he has no stable and permanent power over the body of the obsessed person (which occurs only in possession); and once the time of purification is ended, the devil himself raises the siege and goes off without exorcisms, without injunction." §

By what sign may one recognize that obsession is related to the passive purification of the senses? Obsession may be linked with the passive purification of the senses if the obsessed person works seriously at his perfection, in particular if he is humble, obedient, charitable, and if he has the three signs of the night of the senses indicated by St. John of the Cross. On the other hand, astute, very subtle persons may, for interested motives, seek to make themselves pass for victims of the devil, in such a way especially as to excuse excessively compromising exterior faults which they commit.

In dealing with obsessed persons, the director should be prudent and kind; he should not believe too readily in a true obsession; he should remind the penitent, first of all, how temptation must be resisted, pointing out that it is an occasion to acquire great merits by a salutary, firm, at times heroic reaction, and by the practice of humility. He should remind the penitent that the principal remedies are humble, trusting prayer, recourse to the Immaculate Virgin, to St. Michael, to the guardian angel, the trusting use of the sacraments and sacramentals, scorn, of the devil, who may indeed bark, but who can bite only those who draw near him. The director should also remind his penitent that, if in the violence of temptation disorders are produced without any consent, there is no sin in them. In case of doubt, he will judge that there is no serious sin when the person concerned is habitually well disposed. If he sees that the obsession is part of the passive purification of the senses or

§ *Direttorio mistico,* tr. V, chap. 7, no. 76.

of the spirit, he will give appropriate counsels, which we recalled earlier in the course of this study.9

Lastly, if diabolical obsession is morally certain or very probable, the priest may employ privately the exorcisms prescribed by the Roman Ritual or shortened forms. To avoid agitating the penitent or overexciting him, it is best, as a rule, not to inform him beforehand that one is going to pronounce over him the words of private exorcism; it is sufficient to tell him that one is going to recite over him a prayer approved by the Church.

Possession

What is possession? By possession the devil really dwells in the body of the victim, instead of only making his action felt from the outside, as in obsession. Moreover, by thus acting from within, he not only hinders the free use of a man's faculties, but he himself speaks and acts by the organs of the possessed person, without the latter being able to hinder him from doing so, and even as a rule without his perceiving it.

When we say that the devil dwells in the body of a person, we do not mean that he is there like the soul itself which informs the body, but like a motor which, through the body, acts on the soul. He acts directly on the members of the body, makes them execute all sorts of movements, and he acts indirectly on the faculties in the measure in which they depend on the body for their operations.

Two states are distinguished in possessed persons: a state of crisis, with contortions, outbursts of rage, blasphemous words; and a state of calm. During the crisis, the patient generally loses, it seems, the feeling of what is taking place in him, for afterward he has no memory of what the devil has, they say, done through him. Nevertheless, as an exception, there are possessed persons who remain aware of what is taking place in them during the crisis. This was, it seems, the case with Father Surin, who, while exorcising the Ursulines of Loudun, himself became possessed or at least obsessed. He said: "In this state, there are very few actions in which am I free." 10

9 Cf. *supra,* chap, j: "Conduct to be observed in the night of the senses"; Part IV, chap. 38: "Conduct to be observed in the passive purification of the spirit."

10 Letter to Father d'Attichy (1633); cf. *Lettres spirituelles du P. Jean-Josepb Surin* (Toulouse, 1926), I, 126 ff.

In the state of calm, the devil seems to have withdrawn, although there may still remain at times chronic infirmities which physicians do not succeed in curing.

As a rule possession is more properly a punishment than a purifying trial. However, there are exceptions, like the case of Father Surin, that of Blessed Eustochium of Padua, beatified by Clement XIII, on March 22, 1760,[11] that of Marie des Vallées, spiritual daughter of St. John Eudes.[12] Mention must also be made of the more recent case of Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified, an Arabian Carmelite who died in the odor of sanctity at Bethlehem in 1878, and the cause of whose beatification has been introduced. She was twice the victim of possession, or at least of a very strong obsession, first at the Carmel of Pau, later at that of Mangalore.[1]' There have been other similar cases, in which possession was a concomitant phenomenon of the passive purification of the senses or that of the spirit, in souls that offered themselves as victims for sinners.

What are the signs of real possession? Great care must be taken to distinguish it from certain cases of monomania and of mental alienation which resemble it. According to the Roman Ritual *(De exorcizandis obsessis a daemonio),* there are three principal signs: "To speak an unknown language, making use of several words of this language or understanding him who speaks it; to disclose distant and hidden things; to manifest strength which surpasses the natural powers of the subject, considering his age and state. These and other similar signs, when united in great number, are the strongest indications of possession." They are particularly striking, for example, if a person who does not know either Latin or theology or knows only their rudiments, speaks in correct and even elegant

11 G. Cordara, S.J., *Vita della B. Eustochio,* Rome, 1769.

12 E. Georges, Eudist, *Saint Jean Eudes* (Paris, 1936), pp. 278-315. We read *(ibid.,* p. 291) that Marie des Vallées said to the devil: "Is that all you can do? You are not very strong. . . . Be careful not to omit the least of the afflictions that God permits you to make me endure. . . . But take great care what you do. You are a lion, and I am only a miserable ant. Should the lion overcome the ant, people would make fun of him for having armed himself to fight so weak and wretched a beast. But if the ant overcomes the lion, as it undoubtedly will, because it is fortified by the grace of God, confusion will be the eternal share of the lion. Are you not, therefore, very foolish to do what you do? Shame, shame on the beast with the ten horns" *(Manuscrit de Quebec,* Bk. 1, chap. 4).

12 Estrate, *Vie de Sœur Marie de Jésus-Crucifié* (2nd ed.; Paris, 1916), pp. 85-147, 230-56.

Latin about the most difficult problems of theology, like that of the gratuity of predestination.[14]*It is true that people adduce cases of morbid exaltation which awaken in the memory forgotten languages or fragments that have been heard; but in this question the Ritual demands much more, as we have just seen. Accompanying possession at times is levitation, a preternatural phenomenon which manifests itself under circumstances of such a nature that they cannot be attributed to God or to the good angels, but must be attributed to the devil. According to tradition, this was the case with Simon Magus who, they say, was lifted into the air and fell down.

Another indication of possession is that on coming into contact with a sacred object or on the recitation of certain liturgical prayers, the person believed to be possessed becomes furious and blasphemes horribly. This sign is more significant when the experience is brought about without the knowledge of the person, in such a way that the reaction is not produced by him, by his ill will, or by a desire to simulate possession.

It has been pointed out, apropos of these signs, that in extreme hysteria there are analogous phenomena.[18] Analogous, it is true, but not specifically similar; in hysteria the patient does not discourse in a language of which he is ignorant and in a learned manner on problems of which he has no knowledge at all, such as predestination or the efficacy of grace. Besides, the devil can produce either nervous diseases, or exterior phenomena analogous to those of neuroses; he may also make use of an existing illness and reduce the patient to a state of exasperation.

What are the remedies for possession? The Ritual indicates the following: (i) The possessed person must do penance and purify his conscience by a good confession. (2) He should receive Holy Communion as often as possible, according to the advice of a prudent and enlightened confessor. The more pure and mortified a soul is, the less hold the devil has on it; Holy Communion introduces into the soul the Author of grace who is the conqueror of Satan. However, Holy Communion should be given only in moments of calm. (3) The possessed person should often implore the mercy of God

[14] We know a case of this kind, which we learned of through a written account sent us more than thirty years ago by one of our Dominican friends, who was at that time professor of dogma in the seminary of Mosul.

[14] Cf. Richer, *Etudes cliniques sur la grande hystérie.*

by prayer and fasting. (4) With a great spirit of faith he should make use of sacramentals, in particular of the sign of the cross and holy water.[18] He should have trusting recourse to the invocation of the holy name of Jesus, of His humility, His immense love. (5) Lastly, the exorcisms were instituted for the deliverance of possessed persons in virtue of the power of driving out devils which Jesus Christ left to the Church. But solemn exorcism may be performed only by priests chosen by the bishop of the place and with his special authorization.

The Ritual counsels exorcists to prepare themselves for this difficult function by prayer, fasting, and a humble and sincere confession, so that the devil may not reproach them with their own sins. In addition, solemn exorcism should, at least as a rule, be performed only in a church or chapel. The exorcist should be accompanied by grave and pious witnesses, sufficiently strong to overpower the possessed person if necessary. Lastly, the exorcist should proceed to the interrogations with authority, rejecting all that is useless. He summons the devil or the devils to declare the reason for the possession and to tell when it will end. To oblige the enemy of God to do this, the exorcist must redouble the adjurations which seem to irritate the devil most, that is, the invocations of the holy names of Jesus and Mary. If the evil spirit makes sarcastic and derisive answers, silence must be imposed upon him with authority and dignity. The witnesses should be few in number, they must not ask questions, but should pray silently. The exorcisms should be continued for several hours and even for several days, with intervals of respite, until the deliverance, which should be followed by prayers of thanksgiving.

Many authors point out that the exorcisms are not always efficacious against obsession. They do not deliver the soul completely from an obsession which is part of the passive purifications, for God permits it for a time known to Him, in view of the great advantages which the soul should derive from this trial.

A Striking Example

We have studied particularly the diabolical vexations which Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified had to undergo in 1868 in the Carmel of

[18] Cf. St. Teresa, *Life,* chap. 31.

Pau and in 1871 in that of Mangalore, not only according to the account given by Father Estrate in her *Life* and the shorter report by Father Buzy, but also according to the testimony gathered by her directors and superiors. We are convinced that in her case there was, on two different occasions, possession or at least a strong obsession which took away from the servant of God the responsibility for certain exterior acts (a short departure from the cloister, which was not yet canonically established) and for certain remarks contrary to humility and obedience, virtues which she practiced in a heroic degree, even in those obscure periods, as soon as she recovered the use of her faculties.[17]

We think there was in this case not a punishment, but a trial and very great merit. As Father Estrate,[18] who was one of the directors of this valiant Carmelite, points out, she bore these diabolical vexations with heroic patience, a very great spirit of faith, an admirable confidence in God, an ardent love of God and of souls. As long as she preserved freedom of movement and the use of speech, she spent hours at a time replying to all the suggestions of the devil. The devil had permission to attack her one hundred times in the Carmel of Pau, and he sought by every means to make her utter a complaint; "always conquered, he begged the Master to be allowed not to continue the struggle. Jesus obliged him to go on." The servant of God did not cease to reply to his assaults by words such as these: "I offer my sufferings for the enemies of Jesus, that they may love Him as St. John did." The devil was forced to say: "Do you know why the little Arab speaks thus? Why is she strong? Because she walks in the steps of the Master." At length at the end of forty days she was freed.[18]

This case furnished an example of one of the greatest trials which may accompany the passive purifications of the senses or the spirit. It brings out strikingly the truth of what St. John of the Cross says on this subject: "There is open warfare between two spirits. . . . This attack of the devil takes place also when God bestows His favors upon a soul by the instrumentality of a good angel. The devil sees this occasionally, because God in general permits it to become known to the enemy, that he may do what he can [that is, if God

[17] Cf. Estrate, *Vie* (2nd ed.), pp. 231 ff., 249-55.
[18] *Ibid.,* pp. 106-24.
[19] *Ibid.,* pp. 106-24, 230-56.

grants the soul extraordinary favors, He often permits the devil to fight as if with equal arms, by extraordinary vexations]. . . . At that time the mental agonies are great and occasionally surpass all description; for when spirit has to do with spirit, the evil one causes an intolerable horror in the good one." [20] All authors of mystical theology express the same opinion, and there'are similar facts in the lives of many canonized saints.

The example we have just recalled and others more or less similar are made clear in the light of what St. John of the Cross teaches in *The Dark Night* on the night of the senses and that of the spirit. He states that these nights are tunnels through which generous souls, called to a high degree of perfection, to true sanctity, must pass. If a soul emerges from the first tunnel with a heroic degree of the virtues and if, on leaving the second, the heroic quality of its virtues is even more manifest, it is a certain sign that it did not go astray in these very dark and difficult passages, but, on the contrary, gained very great merits therein. These trials are more particularly painful for souls that have a reparatory vocation and that must, in imitation of our Lord, suffer for the salvation of sinners.

In these exceedingly painful dark nights, the soul may occasionally commit a sin, even a serious sin, as happened to the Apostle St. Peter during the dark night of our Savior's passion. But if, like St. Peter, the tried soul rises immediately with deep repentance, it receives a notable increase of grace and charity and it continues its ascent from the very spot where it stumbled for a moment. "Wherefore the penitent sometimes arises to a greater grace," [21] says St. Thomas.

It follows that these obscure periods in the lives of the servants of God, far from being an obstacle to their beatification, on the contrary bring out more clearly the heroic degree of their virtues. Those who have passed through them have triumphed over the most difficult trials which the saints meet with in this life. This is

[20] *The Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk. II, chap. 23.

[21] *Summa,* Illa, q.89, a. 2. Cf. J. N. Grou, S.J., *Maximes spirituelles* (ed. 1915), 22nd maxitn, p. 238: "To bring certain interior souls to the sense of their total powerlessness and perfect dependence on grace . . . , God humbles them by the sins into wh' _h He permits them to fall, especially when He sees that they count on thefnselves. . . . Just so a mother lets her child take falls which arc not dangerous, that it may recognize its need of her and learn not to leave her."

especially true of those who fight more directly against the devil, and who in this way show more clearly the depth of the reign of God in souls that are wholly submissive to Him. Thus are realized occasionally in an extraordinary manner the words of St. Paul: "But the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the strong. And the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible, hath God chosen, and things that are not, that He might bring to nought things that are." [22]

Note

The article entitled "Possession" in the *Dictionnaire théologique catholique* states: "In our Western civilizations, men would be inclined to say that the devil is interested instead in dissimulating his action. Does he not hold men so much the better when they ignore or deny him?" [23] But, as Father L. de Grandmaison points out: "In the regions where the Gospel penetrates intensively for the first time, it still encounters, as in ancient times, a sort of occult power, usurped bur established, which, by its resistance and manifestations, perfectly recalls the convulsions of the evil spirits in the presence of Jesus. There is hardly a missionary in those countries who has not encountered it." [24]

Why does God permit these diabolical manifestations? St. Bonaventure answers: "It is either for the manifestation of His glory (by constraining the devil, by the mouth of the possessed person, to confess, for example, the divinity of Christ), or for the punishment of sin, or for the correction of the sinner, or for our instruction." [28]

In practice, possession should be admitted only on solid proofs or indications, and the spiritual director should secure the opinion of an experienced physician. St. Philip Neri, although he "thought that persons whom people believe to be possessed by the devil are, in the majority of cases, either sick, melancholy, or mad, nevertheless, judging a certain Catherine, a noble lady of Aversar, to be truly possessed, he freed her from this terrible evil." [26]

[22] Cf. I Cor. i:27f.
[23] Col. 2643.
[24] *Jésus-Christ,* II, 349-34.
[28] *In Hum Sent.,* Dist. VIII, p. II, q. 1, art. unie.
[26] Capecelatro, *La vita di S. Filippo Neri* (Rome, 1901), I, 423.

On temptation in general and its causes, we advise the reading of the excellent articles by Father Masson, O.P., which were published in *La Vie spirituelle,* from 1923 to 1926: I. "Temptation in general, its nature, universality, necessity" (1923, p. 108). II. "Its sources: the flesh *{ibid.,* pp. 193, 333); the world (p. 421); the devil (1924, p. 270); (the tempter, his work, p. 384, his mode of suggestion, by ruse, by violence, his stubbornness; the limits of his power; resistance to temptation)." III. "The processus of temptation" (1926, p. 493). IV. "End of the temptation on the part of the devil, on the part of God: why does God permit temptations? Justice and mercy" (1926, p. 644).

EPILOGUE

I

The Axis of the Spiritual Life and Its Unity

TO conclude, we shall return to our starting point. The problem of the axis of the spiritual life is a catechetical question worth examining theologically, if it is true that the most elementary truths are those which become the most vital and profound when meditated on for a long time, and end by being the object of our contemplation.

Among these elementary truths, is the following: the axis of the spiritual life is found in faith, hope, and charity. Failure to recognize this truth would be an unpardonable error, which would prove that one had lost the meaning of Christian doctrine. But, with respect to this elementary and fundamental question, there are more subtle problems which we must consider at the end of this work.

Someone wrote recently that the division between "ascetical" and "mystical" theology is "a regrettable division, whose error consisted precisely in telescoping sanctifying grace and its peculiar organism of the divine virtues between moralism and mysticism. (The history of modern spirituality is witness to this.)" "St. Thomas did not conceive or build his moral theology on this division, but rather on the following plan: the moral virtues, the theological virtues (subsequently modifiable by the gifts in the interior of their object). Otherwise a considerable section of the Second Part (all the admirable analysis of the regime of the virtues) loses its import and seems impregnated with semi-naturalism, as if the supernaturalness of the gifts was the only integral supernaturalness, that of the virtues being only semi-supernatural." [1]

What is true in these observations? The answer depends on the way the terms "ascetical" and "mystical" are understood. They

[1] *Bulletin Thomiste* (July-December, 1936), p. 78, apropos of the book by Father Lemonnyer, O.P., *Notre Vie divine,* ed. du Cerf, 1936.

should have a good meaning since they are commonly accepted in the Church; but they have not always been understood in the same way. It is, consequently, important to return to this point.

We are happy to see with what insistence the writer of these pages speaks of sanctifying grace and the infused virtues, but he surprised us by reproaching certain Thomists, who in recent years have treated more particularly of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, with having "exaggerated the role of the gifts to the detriment of the theological virtues."

It may be that someone gathered this impression by reading articles written for the purpose of treating especially of infused contemplation, properly so called, and of the passive states, articles in which it was indeed necessary to place the emphasis on the gifts of understanding and of wisdom and their superhuman mode. But we must remind our readers that for the last thirty years or so we have hardly ceased to defend the essentially supernatural character of infused faith (independently of the gifts), by reason of its essential object and its formal motive.[2]

In the domains of dogmatic theology, moral theology, and spirituality, we have always said that all the infused virtues, both theological and moral, are intrinsically and essentially supernatural by reason of the formal object that specifies them. We have not ceased to defend the principle: *'Potentiae, habitus et actus specificantur ab objecto formali.*

In our opinion it would be a gross error to think that the description given by St. Thomas of the moral virtues is impregnated with semi-naturalism. Semi-naturalism would consist in being more attentive to the (intrinsically natural) acquired moral virtues than to the infused moral virtues. It would consist in aiming rather at being a perfect upright man, master of self, than at being a child of God increasingly conscious of his dependence on his heavenly Father and more and more docile to divine inspirations. One might thus reach the state of attributing in part to oneself the respect due to God, which would be a serious error.

It is also fully evident (to ignore the fact would be unpardonable) that, as Father Lemonnyer so rightly insisted, the axis of the supernatural life passes through the theological virtues. We have not

[2] Cf. *De revelatione* (1st ed., «918), I, 430-515. "La Surnaturalité de la foi," *Revue Thomiste,* January, 1914. *Le Sens du mystère* (1934), 234-87.

ceased to say so under different forms,§ and Father Lemonnyer himself graciously recognized, in what he wrote on theological prayer, how well founded is what we have been saying for a long time about common prayer,4 in which, in our opinion, faith, hope, and charity are exercised especially.

This statement contains an elementary truth that certainly deserves to be penetrated deeply. No theologian would think of denying it; but its importance in spirituality may be more or less great according to the idea one has of the distinction between ascetical theology and mystical theology.

The Distinction Between Ascetical and Mystical Theology as It Has Often Been Proposed Since the Seventeenth Century

The distinction between ascetical and mystical theology is not a division of the virtues, like that between the theological and the moral virtues; it is a distinction between two forms of the spiritual life.

Ascetical and mystical theology is the application of the teaching of dogmatic and moral theology to the direction of souls toward ever closer union with God. It presupposes what sacred doctrine teaches about the nature and the properties of the Christian virtues and of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and it studies the laws and the conditions of their progress from the point of view of Christian perfection. It causes the lights of dogmatic and moral theology to converge toward this end.

The distinction between ascetical and mystical theology is inspired by the current meaning and the etymology of these terms. The term "asceticism," as its Greek origin indicates, means the exercise of the virtues. Among the first Christians those were called ascetics who devoted themselves to the practice of mortification, exercises of piety, and other Christian virtues. Consequently the term "ascetical" was applied to that part of spiritual theology which directs souls in the struggle against sin and in the progress of virtue.

Mystical theology, as its name indicates, treats of more hidden

§ *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* pp. 54-80; 115-46 ("The Life of grace or the beginning of eternal life"). *L'Amour de Dieu et la croix de Jésus,* H· *575~^35.'* "La purification passive de la foi, de l'esperance, et de la charité."
Christian Perfection and Contemplation, pp. 208-17.

and mysterious things: of the intimate union of the soul with God; of the transitory phenomena that accompany certain degrees of union, as ecstasy; lastly, of essentially extraordinary graces, such as visions and private revelations.

Until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, writers generally treated under the single title of mystical theology not only the mystical union, infused contemplation, its degrees, and essentially extraordinary graces, but also Christian perfection in general, and the first phases of the spiritual life, the normal progress of which thus seemed directed toward the mystical union as its culminating point. This is the conception found in the mystical theologies of the Carmelites, Philip of the Blessed Trinity, Anthony of the Holy Ghost, Joseph of the Holy Ghost, and of the Dominican Vallgomera, who so often literally reproduced the teaching of Philip of the Blessed Trinity.

Since the seventeenth and eighteen centuries, several authors have deemed it necessary to distinguish absolutely between ascetical theology and mystical theology, which since then have often become subjects of special treatises, such as the *Ascetical Directory* and the *Mystical Directory* of Scaramelli. We wrote in 1920 in one of the first numbers of *La Vie spirituelle:* "Excessively eager to systematize things and to establish a doctrine to remedy abuses, and consequently led to classify things materially and objectively, without a sufficiently lofty and profound knowledge of them, they declared that ascetical theology should treat of the 'ordinary' Christian life according to the three ways, the purgative, the illuminative, and the unitive. As for mystical theology, it should treat only of extraordinary graces, among which they included not only visions and private revelations, but also supernatural, confused contemplation, the passive purifications, and the mystical union." [8]

Thereby the unity of the spiritual life was compromised; the perfection which ascetical theology speaks of, became an end and not a disposition to a more intimate and more elevated union. Mystical theology was no longer of any importance except to some rare privileged souls.

For about the last thirty years many theologians have rejected the division thus conceived between ascetical and mystical theology.

[8] This article is to be found also in *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* pp. 7f.

They have returned to a more traditional doctrine, according to which the ascetical life is a form of the spiritual life in which appears chiefly the human mode of the Christian virtues, while the mystical life is a form of life in which predominates quite manifestly and frequently the superhuman mode of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which are in all the just. From this point of view, the unity of the spiritual life is better comprehended in spite of the differences between the three successive ages distinguished by tradition: that is, the age of beginners, that of proficients, and that of the perfect, or in other words, the purgative, illuminative, and unitive ways. Thus there is a return to a traditional division more commonly received among the ancients than that between ascetical theology and mystical theology, that is, the division between the active life and the contemplative life, which was dear to St. Augustine and to St. Gregory, and was well explained by St. Thomas.

In the opinion of these great masters, the active life, to which is attached the exercise of the moral virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance,® and the outward works of charity prepare for the contemplative life, so far as it regulates the passions that disturb contemplation and so far as it makes us grow in the love of God and of our neighbor.7 Then comes the contemplation of God, which is proper to the perfect; it is found either in the purely contemplative life, or in the mixed life which fructifies in the apostolate. Contemplation then directs action from above and renders it much more supernatural and fruitful.8 The contemplative

' Cf. St. Thomas, IIa IIae, q. 181, a. i: "The active and the contemplative life differ according to the different occupations of men intent on different ends: one of these occupations is the consideration of the truth; and this is the end of the contemplative life, while the other is external work to which the active life is directed. . . . Hence it is clear that the moral virtues belong essentially to the active life." Ad turn: "The chief of the moral virtues is justice." Ad 3um: "It may also be replied that the active life is a disposition to the contemplative life."

Ibid., a. 2: "The knowledge of prudence, which is of itself directed to the works of the moral virtues, belongs directly to the active life."

7 *Ibid.,* q. 182, a. 3: "Hence the work of the active life conduces to the contemplative, by quelling the interior passions which give rise to the fantasms whereby contemplation is hindered."

* *Ibid.,* a. 4: "The contemplative life, with regard to its nature, precedes the active, inasmuch as it applies itself to things which precede and are better than others; wherefore it moves and directs the active life."

Cf. *ibid.,* ad rum, 3um; q. 188, a.6: "From the fullness of contemplation proceed teaching and preaching."

life is chiefly that of the theological virtues and of the gifts which accompany them, as the active life is especially that of the moral virtues.

This traditional division is more profound, more grounded on the very nature of man and also on the nature of grace, the virtues, and the gifts, than the division between ascetical life and mystical life, which may be seriously misunderstood and which it is quite difficult to define clearly.

Disadvantages from a Wrong Understanding of the Division Between Ascetical and Mystical Theology

Some souls seem to have gone beyond the essentially ascetical life (or the active life in the meaning given to it by the ancients), which consists chiefly in methodical exercises of piety, united to the practice of mortification or of the Christian virtues that discipline the passions and regulate relations with one's neighbor. These souls live especially by the theological virtues and, in a more or less latent manner, by the gifts which accompany them. However, they do not yet give evidence of the properly so-called mystical life of passive prayer, described by St. Teresa from the fourth mansion on, and by St. John of the Cross beginning with the clearly characterized passive purification of the senses. The opinion is usually held that the souls we are speaking of here are in a still imperfect illuminative way, intermediary between the purgative or ascetical way of beginners and the essentially mystical or passive way, which, according to St. John of the Cross, is that of proficients, or the advanced, and that of the perfect.[9]

The prayer of the souls we are discussing already rises above methodical exercises; it is a simple lifting up of the soul to God by a prolonged act of faith, followed by acts of hope and love of God. It is often called simplified affective prayer; we have described it under the title of the common prayer of the ancients,[10] and Father Lemonnyer, under the title of theological prayer.[11]

[9] *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. 14: "The soul began to set out on the way of the spirit, the way of proficients, which is also called the illuminative way, or the way of infused contemplation, wherein God Himself teaches and refreshes the soul without meditation or any active efforts that itself may deliberately make."

[10] *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* pp. 208-17.

[11] Cf. *Notre Vie divine,* pp. 123-52. In the opinion of Father Lemonnyer,

Souls such as these seem to be in a stage between the ascetical life, properly so called, and the mystical life in the essential meaning of the term, a period which for the most generous is one of transition and which for others is prolonged for their whole lifetime.[12]

Father Gabriel of St. Magdalen, C.D., makes similar observations when he treats of active (or acquired or mixed) contemplation according to Carmelite writers, in whose opinion it is ordinarily a preparation for infused contemplation.[13] We must also remember that in the prologue to *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* St. John of the Cross says: "Its contents . . . are a solid and substantial doctrine suited to all, if they seek to advance to that detachment of spirit which is here described. My principal object, however, is not to address myself to all, but only to certain persons of our holy Order of Mount Carmel, of the primitive observance." St. John of the Cross wrote chiefly for the most generous souls among contemplatives, for those who wish to take the road which ascends most directly toward very close union with God.

Manifestly, therefore, there is an intermediate stage between the methodical discursive meditation, described in works on ascetical theology, and infused contemplation properly so called, spoken of by mystical authors.

Various Forms of Simplified Prayer

Even the authors who hold that the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith is in the normal way of sanctity and that with-

meditation is moral prayer, the exercise of the practical reason, in which the infused virtue of prudence leads the soul by "elections" to a resolution. Here the influence of the theological virtues is felt only from above and through the intermediary of the moral virtues, the virtue of religion included. Theological prayer, often called affective prayer, is the proper exercise of the virtues of faith, hope, and charity, which have for their object God Himself, with whom the soul enters into intimate conversation for a closer union with Him, and not for practical results that are, so to speak, exterior. Lastly, mystical prayer, the fruit of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, depends on His initiatives and procures for us a sweet experience of divine things.

13 St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. 9.

18 Father Gabriel of St. Magdalen, C.D., S. *Giovanni della Croce, Dottore dell'amore divino* (1937), pp. 165 f.: "There is no question here of a completely active contemplation, nor of a perfectly passive contemplation: a delicate divine infusion meets a most simple activity of the soul. But this divine infusion does not fall under the experience of the soul, whereas the latter may perceive its own activity."

out it there is not the full perfection of Christian life, recognize the difference between the active and the contemplative life. They also say that Marys reach infused contemplation more rapidly than Marthas. Moreover, the former find in contemplation great purifying trials, which at the same time make them work for the salvation of souls.

These authors likewise often distinguish between the acquired prayer of recollection, or simplified affective prayer,[14] and, above it, a latent infused contemplation, similar to the diffuse light which pervades the air when the sun is not directly visible, and which illumines everything though it does not itself appear as a distinct ray. We have often spoken of it.[10] In our opinion, it seems certain that St. Vincent de Paul often had, not only during prayer and the celebration of Mass but in his ministry, this latent infused contemplation, which is an act of living faith accompanied by a certain influence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Through it he continually saw suffering members of Christ in abandoned children and prisoners condemned to the galleys. Therein lay a frequent although diffuse influence of the gift of wisdom under its practical form. St. Thomas [16] points out that this gift, like faith and the gift of understanding, is speculative and practical, in the sense that it bears both on the mysteries to be believed and on the precepts and counsels, or on the conduct of life. In certain servants of God this gift appears more under its practical form, united to the gifts of counsel, fear, piety, and fortitude; in others it appears under its speculative or rather contemplative form, united to the gifts of understanding and knowledge.

Consequently we see why a theologian who is also a man of prayer may often have latent infused contemplation which heightens the activity of his mind and, so to speak, directs his work from on high: for example, that he may ward off useless discussions which would degenerate into personalities; that he may preserve the requisite benevolence toward all; that he may seek especially the profound and fruitful understanding of the mysteries of faith. When

14 St. Teresa describes it in *The Way of Perfection,* chap. 28. It is a simplified acquired prayer, whereas passive prayer begins with the fourth mansion.

*' *Christian Perfection and Contemplation,* pp. 324 fi.; *Les trois conversions et les trois voies,* pp. 124-38; 151-60. Cf. *supra,* chaps. 28, 31, 32.

*· Cf. Ha Ilae, q.45, a.3.

we read the works of St. Augustine, we are led to believe that this contemplation often directed his search, illumined from on high the reasons he developed, and made them all converge in a superior synthesis which he finally seized at a single glance. Father Cayré, A.A., has rightly insisted on this point in his beautiful book, *La Contemplation augustinienne* (1927).

To the theologian who, like St. Thomas, often recalls the same principles to illumine questions such as those of grace, free will, merit, and sin, from time to time one of these oft-quoted principles appears in all its elevation and radiance, throwing light on entire tracts, previously studied with patience. Take, for example, the principle of predilection: "No one thing would be better than another if God did not will greater good for one than for another." [17] This principle expresses in equivalent terms the thought of St. Paul: "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" [18] and contains virtually the doctrine of predestination and that of grace.

In this case the theologian has a contemplation which is in a sense acquired, so far as it is the fruit of his work, and which, in a superior sense, is infused, so far as the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost elevates it in a more or less manifest manner, giving it a penetration and spiritual sweetness surpassing simple faith and theological speculation. Faith adheres to revealed mysteries, the gift of understanding makes us penetrate them, the gift of wisdom makes us taste them.[1']

Clearly manifest infused contemplation, such as St. John of the Cross describes in *The Dark Night,* especially in Book II, during and after the purification of the spirit, is superior to acquired or mixed contemplation which we have just spoken of. St. Thomas received this contemplation in an eminent degree toward the end of his life, when he could no longer dictate. When we speak of this

17 Cf. la, q. 20, a.3, 4.

18 Cf. I Cor. 4:7.

18 In this case there are three infused habits specifically distinct by reason of their formal object, although these gifts bear on the mysteries of faith. Faith itself adheres to these mysteries owing to the authority of God revealing. The gift of understanding makes us penetrate them under a special illumination, which is the immediate rule or the formal motive of this act of penetration as such (Ila Ilae, q. 8, a. 1, 2, 3, 6). The gift of wisdom makes us taste them under another special inspiration which utilizes the connaturalness with divine things based on charity *(ibid.,* q. 45, a. 2), and which makes us attain them, "non proprie ut revelata, sed ut fruibilia." Cf. la, q. 43, a. 3.

contemplation, it does not follow that we do not esteem the less elevated forms of knowledge which dispose to it.

We have often insisted on the different aspects of this great problem. In concluding, we revert to this subject in order to show that the axis of the spiritual life is not displaced by ascetical theology or by the mystical theology of the best masters whose teaching the Church approves.

The Axis of the Spiritual Life and Ascetical Theology Rightly Understood

It suffices to read any good ascetical work, such as the *Introduction to a Devout Life,* by St. Francis de Sales, and the first books of his *Treatise on the Love of God,* where he does not yet deal with contemplation but only with meditation, to realize that the axis of the spiritual life, which rests especially on the theological virtues, far from being displaced in the ascetical fife, is already greatly strengthened. The holy doctor says that interior and exterior mortification is a powerful means to draw down upon us the favors of heaven, if we practice it in charity and through charity. He also states very practically that the greatest mortifications are not the best, declaring that ordinary ones, which fall to our lot daily and unexpectedly, are more fruitful and assure the conformity of our will with God's will, signified by the precepts and the counsels. In these pages the saint reminds us that mortification without prayer is a body without a soul, and that prayer without mortification is a soul without a body. In these works he treats not only theoretically but practically of the progress of the virtues illumined by faith and vivified by charity, especially of the progress of the theological virtues. St. Francis de Sales here applies in a practical manner the teaching of St. Thomas in the second part of the *Summa,* by causing to converge toward daily acts what the Angelic Doctor tells us of virtue in general, of the virtues in particular, their motive, their connection, and their progress. Abstraction separated these questions; ascetical theology reunites them in order to point out to us the road that leads to perfection. It aims at the end to be attained practically rather than at the nature of virtues to be well defined.

Ascetical theology rightly understood, far from being a moral system which fails to recognize the elevation of the theological vir-

tues, is inspired by the breath of these virtues and directed toward a higher life to which it makes the soul aspire. To show how the moral virtues should be at the service of faith, hope, and love of God and of souls in God, to point out how the spiritual life should increasingly dominate every disorder of the sensible part of the soul, triumph over egoism, self-love, and pride under all its forms, certainly is not to change the axis of the spiritual life. It is at times necessary to recall these absolutely elementary truths which the erroneous linking of words would cause us to forget, so much the more so as we are too greatly inclined to dispense ourselves from ascetical effort and as we too readily renounce higher aspirations.

The Axis of the Spiritual Life and True Mystical Theology

Likewise the axis of the spiritual life is certainly not changed, the role of the gifts of the Holy Ghost is not exaggerated to the detriment of the theological virtues, when, in company with the greatest spiritual writers, we point out what should be the progress of faith, hope, and charity in the illuminative way; [20] when, with St. John of the Cross, we recall how these three virtues are purified during the passive night of the spirit, how their formal motive stands out with increasing relief, like three stars of the first magnitude in this superior obscurity.[21] Similarly the role of the gifts is not exaggerated to the detriment of the theological virtues by showing their heroic degree in the unitive life of the perfect, described by the great mystics.[22]

St. John of the Cross does not exaggerate the role of the gifts to the detriment of the theological virtues; on the contrary he practically never mentions the gifts themselves, but writes continually about faith, hope, and charity, using capital letters to designate these virtues. It would be as unjust to reproach him with having failed

[20] We developed this idea in a series of articles on the theological virtues, and in another on these same virtues according to St. Catherine of Siena. Cf. *La Vie spirituelle,* May, June, December, 1935; January, April, October, 1936. Cf. *supra,* chaps. 7-21.

[21] On this subject, cf. *L'Amour de Dieu et la croix de Jésus,* II, 575-632. Cf. *supra,* chaps. 39-41.

[22] Cf. Philip of the Blessed Trinity, *Summa theologiae mysticae* (ed. Brussels, 1874), III, 132-274: "De exercitio virtutum theologicarum et moralium (in statu heroico)." Cf. *supra,* chaps. 42^47.

to recognize the importance of the gifts as to claim that he falls into a false supematuralism which neglects the human subject, because he emphasizes the abnegation presupposed by the loftiest perfection. The faith he speaks of not only adheres to revealed mysteries, but is rendered penetrating and often sweet by the influx of the rarely named gifts of understanding and wisdom.

Is faith depreciated by showing what it is in all its sublimity, when it bears all its fruits? The regime of the virtues is not sacrificed to that of the gifts by pointing out what faith is when illumined by the gifts, as several great Thomists have done. Likewise the value of reasoning is not lessened by preparing oneself for the "simple intuition of the truth" which St. Thomas speaks of in connection with circular contemplation.[23] Because discourse ceases in this contemplation, it certainly does not follow that discourse must be renounced outside of contemplation. In like manner the importance of the study of sacred doctrine is not disparaged by saying it should be made with love of divine truth that prepares the soul for union with God, which is obviously superior to study itself.[24]

Let us not stop at the external chaff of words, but penetrate to the kernel of things with a healthy realism. The supernatural virtues are not depreciated when, to explain the highest forms of the life of faith, we speak of the superhuman mode of the gifts of understanding and wisdom, which make us penetrate and taste revealed mysteries.[28] The same holds true in dealing with the radiant influence of the apostolic life of the greatest saints or of the life of reparation. What might happen, on the contrary, is that, under pretext of defending the superiority of the theological virtues over the gifts, one might diminish these very virtues by failing to recognize the value of the inspirations of the Holy Ghost which cause the

[TM]*Sunnna,* Ila Ilae, q. 180, a. 6.

s' Ibid., q. *166:* "Of studiousness"; q. 167: "Of curiosity."

26 Cf. *Christian Perfection and Contemplation* (pp. 330 f.): "Infused contemplation is an act which proceeds, in so far as its substance is concerned, from living faith, and with respect to its superhuman mode, from the gift of wisdom or of understanding" (Cajetan and Joseph of the Holy Ghost). We do not conceive of an act of these gifts which would not proceed radically from faith: here there is subordination of the *habitus* and of their formal objects. The fact remains that the theological virtues are superior to the gifts, although they receive from the latter an additional perfection, for example, of penetration. Thus the tree is more perfect than its fruits, but with them it i» more perfect than without them. Cf. *supra,* chap. 31.

spirit of faith, hope, and love of God to grow more and more. By so doing, one would incline toward a moralism that would exaggerate the value of human prudence to the detriment of union with God.

If a Thomist is to give a course in mystical theology, he must certainly speak *ex professo* of infused contemplation, at first latent, then manifest; of its signs, its nature, and its fruits. On this point he may not omit the testimony of St. Teresa or of St. John of the Cross; he should seek to explain it theologically by the principles formulated by St. Thomas. The result would not be a clumsy concordance, nor would the use of this method be reprehensible in writing a work of this kind. Because St. Thomas himself did not write a mystical theology, but gave its principles, he certainly did not forbid the writing of such a text. Similarly, because he did not write the *Praxis confessarii* of St. Alphonsus, he did not exclude the possibility of similar works. It would be narrowness of spirit to renounce, under the pretext of Thomism, the theological treatment of the essential questions of mystical theology, or in treating them to fear a depreciation of the theological virtues which, on the contrary, appear therein in all their loftiness.

We fully agree with what Father Lemonnyer says, in the work we quoted above, about the value of theology: "Grace and the virtues are not realities whose nature, object, mechanism wait to become intelligible to us and to make the spiritual life intelligible to us until we have completed the inventory of ascetical and mystical experiences. . . . These experiences do not judge the theology of the Church; the theology of the Church judges them, illumines them, and praises them according to their merits." 20*

The theologian should, moreover, avoid any conceit, which would be more intolerable in him than in many others; it would take away all vitality from his interior life, depriving it of great graces, and would prevent him from understanding as he should prayerful souls, incapable of opening their hearts to him. He should remember that his theological wisdom, acquired *secundum perfectum usum rationis,* is inferior to the infused gift of wisdom, which judges according to the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and its connaturality with divine things.27 St. Thomas possessed these two wisdoms

20 Cf. *Notre Vie divine,* p. 346.

27 Cf. IIa IIae, q.45, a.z; a.4 ad zum: "This argument considers, not the wisdom of which we speak but that which is acquired by the study and re-

in an eminent degree; the elevation of the second prevented him from taking satisfaction in the first, to such a degree that at the end of his life, when he could no longer dictate, he was as if lost in God through contemplation.

Dominic Banez, one of St. Teresa's directors, used to say that theologians, after spending years in the study of theology, profit by association with spiritual persons. In fact, if the theologian's personal interior life remains quite mediocre, if he has not persevered in ascetical effort, or led a profound life of prayer, he cannot sufficiently grasp the admirable spiritual riches contained in the treatises which he explains. Then he delays excessively over the rind and does not penetrate sufficiently into the substance. If he is teaching positive theology, he even runs the risk of becoming above all a historian; if he is teaching speculative theology, of being scarcely more than a logician or a metaphysician who speaks about the great supernatural mysteries from a relatively inferior point of view. The same is true of the exegete who interprets the Epistles of St. Paul according to his own mediocre psychology, which scarcely suggests "hunger and thirst for the justice of God." Then everything is depreciated and no longer is a matter of interest.

The spirit of theological science becomes so much the less alive when one dallies too much over what is inferior in it, and when one no longer disposes oneself in this way for "the very fruitful understanding of the mysteries" spoken of by the Vatican Council.[28] If, on the contrary, the theologian loves to read the great spiritual writers and if he sees the lives of prayerful souls truly dead to themselves in the midst of the passive purifications which they have had to undergo, and already possessing a very close union with God, then he has the impression of being in a higher atmosphere, very different from that in which one is too preoccupied with one's scientific reputation and with discussions in which self-love and many but slightly interesting petty passions often mingle. From the higher point of view dominated by the gifts of understanding and wisdom, which render faith penetrating and sweet, the theological treatises appear more elevated and profound. We personally taught St. Thomas' treatise on the theological virtues for the first

search of reason, and is compatible with mortal sin." *Ibid.,* c.: "The wisdom of which we arc speaking cannot be together with mortal sin."

[28] Scss. Ill, chap. 4 (Denzinger, 1796).

time before we saw souls of prayer that had passed through the passive purification of the spirit. When, after acquaintance with several of these souls, we returned on different occasions to the explanation of St. Thomas' articles relative to faith, hope, and charity, we saw much more in them than we did before. We passed from the confused to the distinct concept of the theological virtues and, in varying degrees, to their experiential concept. Such an experience shows ever more clearly how the theological teaching of St. Thomas sprang from the plenitude of contemplation, to use the expression dear to the saint.[29] Then, without clumsy concordance, the teachings of a St. John of the Cross help one to a better understanding of what the Angelic Doctor meant. Often our interior life, which remains too superficial and mediocre, does not enable us to discover this plenitude of meaning; we should, therefore, be grateful to those who help us to do so. This helps us understand why St. Thomas himself said that he had learned more at the foot of the crucifix and before the tabernacle than in books. He spent hours at night in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and in this profound prayer he grew in the knowledge of the spirit of those things of which theological books give us the letter.

What we have said shows that the axis of the spiritual life is found in the theological virtues [30] which are superior to the gifts, but which

[29] *Summa,* lia Ilae, q. 188, a.6.

[30] What might, without our willing it, lessen the supernaturalness of the infused virtues, including that of the theological virtues, would be to define our supernatural life, as has been done, not as the participation in the intimate life of God, but the *incarnatio»* of the divine life in us. First of all, in this case "incarnation" is a metaphorical expression to which must be preferred preciseness of terms when possible. Moreover, "incarnation" designates the union of two natures, and more precisely the relation of dependence and appurtenance of the less elevated in regard to the person who possesses the higher of these two natures. To define the supernatural life by the incarnation in us of the divine life tends to make our own nature enter into the definition of the supernatural life, as die human nature of Christ is part of Him. Without wishing to do so, one would thus revert, because of lack of precision of terms, to the conception which denies the essential supernaturalness of the infused virtues. Their supernaturalness would be reduced to a mode superadded to our natural activity; now this mode is already superadded to the acquired moral virtues, governed by charity, and the acts of which are meritorious.

What we have just said in this chapter may be confirmed by reading in the *Catéchisme* composed by John of St. Thomas and translated into Latin under the title *Compendium totius doctrinae christianae* (Venice, 1693, pp. 205 if.), the chapter on "Meditation and Contemplation," and the necessity of a profound interior life for every religious.

receive from them an added perfection. Faith is essentially supernatural and infallible by reason of its formal motive, but it is more perfect when, under the inspiration of the gifts of understanding and wisdom, it becomes penetrating and sweet; when it gives us the fruitful understanding of the mysteries of the inner life of God, of the redemptive Incarnation, of the infinite value of the Sacrifice of the Mass, of the inestimable treasure of the presence of the Blessed Trinity in us, of the intimate union with God which finds its perfection in the transforming union, the prelude of eternal life. From this point of view, nothing is diminished, but one grasps increasingly better the value of infused faith and notably, below it, that of theology.

π

The Beatific Vision and Its Normal Prelude

AT the beginning of this work,[1] we stated that the life of grace is /% the beginning of eternal life, according to the traditional formula: "Grace is the seed of glory." It is essentially the same life in its basis, in spite of two differences: here on earth we know God only in the obscurity of faith, not in the evidence of vision, and although we hope to possess Him inamissibly some day, we can while on earth lose Him by mortal sin. In spite of these two differences relating to faith and hope, it is the same essentially supernatural life: sanctifying grace, received in the very essence of the soul, and infused charity, received in the will, should last forever, and with them the infused moral virtues and the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. The summit of the normal development of the life of grace is, therefore, the beatific vision received after death. By way of conclusion, we shall briefly discuss this vision of heaven and its normal prelude on earth in the truly purified soul.

The Absolutely Immediate Vision of the Divine Essence

We shall sum up here what St. Thomas teaches on this point in the *Summa?*

If God had created us in a purely natural state with a mortal body and an immortal soul, but without the supernatural life of grace, even then our last end, our beatitude, would have consisted in knowing God and loving Him above all else, for our intellect is made to know the truth, and especially the supreme Truth, and our will is made to love and will good, and especially the sovereign Good.

If we had been created without the supernatural life of grace, the final reward of the just would have been to know God and to love Him, but they would have known Him only from without, so to

[1] Vol. I, chap. I, pp. 29 f.
[2] Cf. Ia, q.iz, a. 1–13.

speak, by the reflection of His perfections in creatures, as the greatest philosophers of antiquity knew Him. Without a doubt, we would have known Him in a more certain manner without admixture of errors, but by abstract knowledge, through the intermediary of things and of limited concepts in the mirror of creatures. We would have known God as the first cause of spirits and bodies, and we would have enumerated His infinite perfections known analogically by their reflection in the created order. Our ideas of the divine attributes would have remained, we have said, like squares of mosaic incapable of reproducing perfectly the spiritual physiognomy of God without hardening it. This abstract and mediate knowledge would have let many obscurities subsist, in particular in regard to the intimate harmonizing of the divine perfections. We would always have asked ourselves how infinite goodness and the divine permission of evil are able to harmonize, how infinite justice and infinite mercy can accord intimately. The human intellect would not have been able to forbear saying: If I could only see this God, who is the source of all truth and goodness, of the life of creatures, and of intellects and wills! This desire would have remained conditional and inefficacious if we had been created in a purely natural state.

But, in reality, the infinite mercy of God has raised us to supernatural life, whose full flowering is called not only the future life, but eternal life, because it is measured by the single instant of immobile eternity. Preaching the beatitudes at the very beginning of His ministry, our Lord tells us: "Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven." [3] To the Samaritan woman He says: "He that shall drink of the water that I will give him, shall not thirst forever; but the water that I will give him, shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting." [4] In His sacerdotal prayer, Christ says: "Now this is eternal life: that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." [e] St. Paul explains this statement to us by saying: "We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known." [8]

• Matt, j: 11.
• John 4:13 f.
• John 17:3.
• Cf. I Cor. 13:11.

And St. John adds: "We shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is." [7]

The Church has defined that this revealed doctrine means an immediate vision of the divine essence without the intermediary of any creature previously known.[8] In other words, by the gaze of our intellect supernaturally strengthened by the light of glory, we shall see God better than we see with our eyes of flesh the persons with whom we speak, for we shall see Him clearly as an object closer to us than we are to ourselves. Here on earth we know especially what God is not: we know that He is not material, changing, limited; we shall then see Him as He is in His Deity, in His infinite essence, in His intimate life common to the three Persons. Grace is a participation of this essence and life since it will give us to see Him thus immediately as He sees Himself, to love Him as He loves Himself, to live eternally by Him.

St. Thomas explains this revealed doctrine by stating[9] that between God and us there will not be even the intermediary of an idea, for no created idea can represent such as it is in itself, the pure, intellectual, eternally subsistent being that is God and His infinite truth, or His limitless love. We shall not be able to express our contemplation by any word, even by any interior word, just as a man is rendered incapable of speech when absorbed by the sight of a sublime and indescribable spectacle.

This immediate vision of the divine essence immensely surpasses all the created concepts of the divine perfections that we can have here on earth. We are called to see all the divine perfections intimately harmonized, identified in the eminence of the Deity, or the inner life of God; to see how the tenderest mercy and the most inflexible justice proceed from one and the same infinitely generous and infinitely holy love, from an eternal love of the supreme Good, which is, to be sure, intimately diffusive of self (the principle of mercy), but which also has a right to be loved above all (the principle of justice). We shall see how mercy and justice are united in all the works of God, how eternal love is identical with the sovereign good always loved, how divine wisdom is identical with the

[7] Cf. I John 3:2.
[8] Denzinger, nos. 530, 693.
[9] Cf. Ia, q. 12, a.2.

first truth always known, and how all these perfections harmonize and are but one in the very essence of Him who is.

We shall also see the infinite fecundity of the divine nature in the three divine Persons; the eternal generation of the Word, "splendor of the Father and figure of His substance." We shall gaze upon the ineffable procession of the Holy Ghost, term of the common love of the Father and of the Son, the bond uniting Them eternally in the most absolute diffusion of Themselves. The supreme Being is essentially diffusive of Itself in the intimate life of God, and freely bestows Its riches by means of creation and by our gratuitous elevation to the life of grace. Thus will be verified St. Paul's words: "Whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son; that Fie might be the first-born amongst many brothers." [10] From all eternity God has an only Son to whom He communicates all His divine nature; Fie gives Him to be "God of God, light of light." He has willed to have other sons, adopted sons, to whom He communicates a participation in His nature, sanctifying grace in the essence of their souls, and from this grace proceed in their higher faculties the light of glory and inamissible charity. Thus, St. Thomas says, "by the incarnation of the Son we receive adoptive sonship in the likeness of His natural sonship." [11]

We shall also contemplate immediately the intimate and indissoluble union of the person of the Word and of the humanity of the Savior. We shall see thereby all the splendor of the divine maternity of Mary, of her mediation, the price of the salvation of souls, and the unlimited riches of these words so quickly uttered: "The eternal life of the elect."

No one can tell the joy that will be born in us of this absolutely immediate vision, which will be like a spiritual fusion of our soul, of our intellect, and of the divine essence, an uninterrupted transforming union, an intimate and perfect communion that nothing will ever be able to lessen. The love which will result from this vision will be so pure and strong a love of God that nothing will ever be able to diminish it. This love will be sovereignly spontaneous, but no longer free; it will be superior to liberty, ravished by the sovereign Good. By this love we shall rejoice especially that God is God,

10 Rom. 8:29.

11 St. Thomas, IIIa, q. 3, a.3 ad ium.

infinitely holy, just, and merciful; we shall adore all the decrees of His providence in view of the manifestation of His goodness, and we shall subordinate ourselves completely to Him. We shall enter into His beatitude, according to the words of our Savior in the parable of the talents: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." [12] We can form some idea of the activity of the saints in heaven by the radiation of their lives on earth, such as it appears, for example, in our day in the numerous graces obtained through the intercession of Mary in the sanctuary at Lourdes, or through the prayer of a St. Teresa of Lisieux.

The Normal and Immediate Prelude of the Beatific Vision

If sanctifying grace is the seed of eternal life in us, what follows as a result? First of all, that sanctifying grace, called "the grace of the virtues and the gifts," is "much more excellent," as St. Thomas says,[13] than the graces *gratis datae,* like the gift of miracles, that of tongues, or prophecy which announces a contingent event. These graces are, so to speak, exterior; they give us signs of the divine life, but they are not themselves the divine life shared in us.

Now, it is from the grace of the virtues and the gifts received by all at baptism, and not from graces *gratis datae* and extraordinary graces that, as we have seen, the infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith proceeds. This contemplation is an act of living faith, illumined by the gifts of understanding and wisdom. It is not, therefore, an essentially extraordinary favor like prophecy or the gift of tongues, but is found in the normal way of sanctity.

The truth of this conclusion becomes even more apparent if we observe that sanctifying grace, being essentially ordained to eternal life, is likewise ordained to the normal and immediate prelude of the beatific vision. Is not this prelude precisely the eminent exercise of infused faith illumined by the gifts of wisdom and understanding, that is, the infused contemplation of the divine goodness and its radiation, together with perfect charity and the ardent desire for the beatific vision? On earth this ardent desire is found in its

[12] Matt. 25:23.
[13] Cf. Ia IIae, q. 111, a. 5.

full perfection only in the transforming union. Therefore this union does not appear to be outside the normal way of sanctity, especially if one considers, not so much a given individual soul, but the human soul and, in it, sanctifying grace considered in itself, as the seed of glory.

The ardent desire for God is only too rare on earth, even in consecrated souls; and yet if there is a good to which the Christian should ardently aspire, evidently it is the eternal possession of God. To attain it, he should desire an ever deeper faith, a firmer confidence, a purer and stronger love of God, virtues which are found precisely in the transforming union. Thus this union appears, in profoundly humble and fully purified souls, as the immediate prelude of the beatific vision. There must, in fact, be some proportion between the intensity of the desire and the value of the good desired; in this case the value of the good being infinite, it could not be too greatly desired. Consequently it is not fitting that this infinite good should be granted to a soul that does not yet desire it ardently. The more purified the soul is, the more it aspires to the possession of God, and if at death the soul's desire is not as ardent as it should be, this is a sign that it needs additional purification, that of purgatory.

The dogma of purgatory, then, throws a new light on the present question. Purgatory is a punishment which supposes a sin that could have been avoided and an insufficient satisfaction that could have been complete if we had better accepted the trials of the present life. It is certain that no one will be detained in purgatory except for sins he could have avoided or for negligence in making reparation for them. Therefore normally we should, like the saints, undergo our purgatory in this life while meriting, while growing in love, instead of after death without meriting.

Therefore sanctifying grace, which is of itself ordained to eternal life, is also ordained to such perfection that the soul may receive the light of glory immediately after death without passing through purgatory. This disposition to enter heaven immediately after death supposes a complete purification, analogous at least to that of souls that are about to leave purgatory and have a very ardent desire for God. According to St. John of the Cross, this complete purification is normally found on earth only in those who have courageously endured the passive purifications of the senses and the spirit,

which prepare the soul for intimate union with God.[14]*This reason confirms all that we have said and shows that the passive purifications are indeed in the normal way of sanctity, like the close union with God for which they prepare. Evident also is the degree of sanctity in question in the expression "the normal way of sanctity"; that sanctity is meant which permits the soul to enter heaven immediately after death.

Such is, we believe, the teaching of St. John of the Cross, which admirably preserves and explains the traditional doctrine on this point, in particular that of the great spiritual writers who preceded him. To grasp the meaning and import of this teaching, souls must doubtless be considered not only as they are, but as they should be. Now, it is the work proper to spirituality to remind souls incessantly of what they should be that they may go beyond what they are.

This lofty doctrine also conforms perfectly to what St. Thomas tells us not only about the nature of grace, the seed of glory, but also about the beatitudes and the imitation of Jesus Christ,[16] the virtues of the purified soul,[10] the higher degree of humility,[17] patience,[18] the spirit of faith,[19] confidence in God, and charity.[20]

St. Thomas, St. Albert the Great, St. Bonaventure, and after them St. John of the Cross and St. Francis de Sales [21] found this teaching in the fathers who spoke of the relations of contemplation and perfect love, in St. Paul himself, and in the Gospel. St. Paul delights in saying: "That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation [if it is well borne], worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." [22] He gives us the ardent

14 In *The Dark Night of the Soul* (Bk. II, chap, 20), St. John of the Cross says: '"Love works in such souls—they are few, and perfectly purified in this life—that which purgatory works in others in the next."

16 Cf. la Ilae, q.69; *In Matt.* 5:3-13.

18 Cf. la Ilae, q.61, a.5.

17 Cf. Ila Ilae, q. 161, a.6 ad 3um: "The appetite may even go as far as lovingly to embrace external abasement."

18 Cf. Illa, q.46, a.4: "It was most fitting that Christ should suffer the death of the cross, first of all, as an example of virtue. For Augustine thus writes: . . . In order, then, that no kind of death should trouble an upright man."

18 Comm. in Ep. ad Hebraeos, 10:1-40, "per totum."

20 Ibid.; also Ila Ilae, q. 27; q. 184, a.3; *Comm. in lib. Job,* chaps. 1, 7, 21: "On the patience of the just in great tribulations."

21 *Treatise on the Love of God,* Bk. VI, chaps. 3-15; Bk. IX, chaps. 12-15.

22 Sec II Cor. 4:17.

desire for it by reminding us that we have received the "pledge of the Spirit," [23] or the pledge and foretaste of eternal life. And our Lord Himself says to us: "If any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink. . . . Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." [24] "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them; he it is that loveth Me. And he that loveth Me, shall be loved of My Father; and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." [25] This secret manifestation of Christ to the faithful soul is truly the prelude of eternal life; it is found especially in the highest of the eight beatitudes: "Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers. . . . Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake." [28] These beatitudes are, says St. Thomas, the highest acts of the virtues and the gifts; there is in them "a kind of imperfect inchoation of future happiness." [27] Even here on earth, the fruits of these merits begin to appear, and they contain a savor of eternal life, or a foretaste of the joy of the elect.

[24] *Ibid., 5:5.*
[24] John 7:37 f.
[28] John 14:21.
[28] Matt. 5:8-10.

Summa, la Ilae, q.69, a.2: "The hope of future happiness may be in us for two reasons: first, by reason of our having a preparation for, or a disposition to, future happiness; and this is by way of merit; secondly, by a kind of imperfect inchoation of future happiness in holy men, even in this life. For it is one thing to hope that the tree will bear fruit, when the leaves begin to appear, and another, when we see the first signs of the fruit."

ADDENDA

On the Nature of Spiritual Theology

We call attention to a good work by Father Gabriel of St. Magdalen, C.D., which appeared in the *Acta Academiae Romanae S. Thomae* (1939): "De indole psychologica theologiae spiritualis." This article, we believe, contains the most exact statement that has been made on this subject following two recent controversies: that between Father Stolz, O.S.B., and M. Penido on whether the psychological consideration of the facts of the interior life belongs to the domain of spiritual theology; and that between Jacques Maritain and Father T. Deman on the relation of spiritual theology with theology as such.

Father Gabriel answers these two questions as follows:

1. In reality spiritual theology as it exists today implies a psychological study of the facts of the interior life, but a study made in a manner notably different from that of St. Teresa, who is almost solely descriptive, and from that of St. John of the Cross, who interprets these facts theologically in order to show what the evolution of the life of grace in a completely faithful soul is and ought to be.

2. This psychological study may be scientific, and it becomes so when it establishes universal psychological laws, for example, on the relations of purifying aridity and union with God.

3. This study becomes theological when these laws find their superior basis in fixed theological principles. Such is the character of the psychological consideration of the spiritual life in the work of St. John of the Cross, in particular when he establishes the necessity of the passive purification of the senses and then that of the spirit to attain the intimate and perfect union with God, which is the culminating point of the evolution of the life of grace in perfect souls. (Thus fixed theological conclusions are reached.)

4. The psychological study of the facts of the life of the soul, although necessary even to moral theology in the tracts on h «man

acts, the passions, the virtues in general and in particular, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost, is particularly requisite for spiritual theology, which considers the development of the interior life and its different phases even to perfect union. Consequently spiritual theology preserves the same concepts of grace, faith, confidence, charity, contemplation, and so on, as does moral theology, such as St. Thomas considers it. Nevertheless in spiritual theology these concepts are in closer relation with the concrete development of the interior life: for example, the concept of infused contemplation with the successive phases of the night of the senses, the night of the spirit, and perfect union. As a result we are led, not to admit a specific distinction between theology as conceived by St. Thomas and spiritual theology, but to see in the latter a function of theology, which, without being a science subordinated to theology, depends essentially on its principles.

Father Gabriel thus admits, as we do, that spiritual theology is an application of theology which determines the nature of the intimate union of the soul with God and the means (the acts, trials, graces) which lead to this union. It thus establishes, according to fixed theological principles, juxtaposed with the experience of the saints, the superior laws of the life of grace.

This is the point of view we took in the introduction and in the course of this work. Spiritual theology is, we said—designedly using a very general term—an application of theology, an application which is still in the domain of the universal, and on which depend the art of direction and the prudence of the director, which is the particular, contingent, and final application to a given person rather than to another.[1]

We also stated that spiritual theology is a branch of theology, or one of its integral parts *(ratione materiae')* ;[2] but although it has a less extended domain than moral theology as conceived by St.

[1] In the works of great spiritual writers, there are eminent parts which are theologically established; they alone belong to spiritual theology *in statu scientiae.* Other parts belong only to the art of direction, which must not be confounded with the prudence of the director. This prudence makes use of this art when the director has sufficient knowledge of it; the gift of counsel and certain graces of state may also supply for the knowledge of this art when the director has not gone deeply enough into it.

[2] Thus many Thomists say, in a higher domain: predestination is an objective part of Providence, and it attains what is most elevated in the object of Providence.

Thomas, it is the highest of its applications or its branches, for its end is to lead souls to intimate union with God. By it theology returns to its point of departure, to its eminent source, to divine revelation contained in Scripture and tradition. Spiritual theology, as a matter of fact, studies what should be the infused contemplation of revealed mysteries and the divine union resulting from this contemplation. In a word, it shows what the normal prelude of eternal life should be. Thereby the cycle of sacred science is completed.

From this point of view, spiritual theology presumes a thoroughly profound knowledge of dogmatic theology and of moral theology, which are the two parts of a single science that is eminently speculative and practical, like "the impression of the science of God in us." [3] Thereby the superior unity of theology is maintained, and we see ever better how it realizes what the Vatican Council says: "Reason also, illumined by faith, when it seeks zealously, piously, and soberly, attains through the gift of God some understanding of the mysteries, and that a most fruitful one, now from the analogy of those which it knows naturally, now from the interrelation of those mysteries with the ultimate end of man." [4]

• Cf. St. Thomas, la, q. i, **a.**3, 4.
4 Sess. Ill, chap. 4.

Synthesis of the Treatise on the Three Ages of the Interior Life

(To be read from the bottom up)

Unitive life of the perfect	full	extraordinary, e.g., with the vision of the Blessed Trinity
		ordinary — eminent contemplative form; apostolic form
	weak	not very continual union, often interrupted
	initial	passive purification of the spirit more or less well borne
Illuminative life of proficients	full infused contemplation	extraordinary or accompanied by visions, revelations
		ordinary — active form, or form ordained to action, e.g., gift of wisdom under practical form; form
	weak	transitory acts of infused contemplation (cf. *The Dark Night,* Bk. I, chap. 9)
	initial	passive purification of the senses more or less well borne (initial infused contemplation)
purgative life of beginners	full or generous	fervent souls; pious and devout souls
	weak	tepid or retarded souls, not without relapses
	initial	first conversion or justification

Summary of the Work in Three Retreats

FIRST RETREAT: ON SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

1. The last end of life: celestial beatitude, II, 644-51; the life of grace, eternal life begun, I, 29-39.
2. Sin, its roots and consequences; the predominant fault, I, 299-322; tepidity, I, 389-96.
3. The redemptive love of Christ for us, I, 109-18; II, 128 if., 480-87.
4. Charity toward God, II, 187-98, 465-68.
5. Charity toward one's neighbor, II, 187-98, 468-71.
6. Mortification, I, 275-98.
7. Humility, II, 117-39.
8. Poverty, II, 140-48.
9. Chastity, II, 108-16.
10. Holy obedience, II, 149-57.
11. The cross and purifications in general, II, 40-64, 356-99.
12. The prayer of petition and liturgical prayer, I, 428-43.
13. Mental prayer, I, 444-53.
14. Docility to the Holy Ghost, II, 223-48.
15. Devotion to Mary, II, 265-71.
16. How to live profoundly by the Mass, II, 249-64.
17. Holy Communion, II, 258-64.
18. Zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, II, 213-21

SECOND RETREAT: ON THE SPIRITUAL ORGANISM

i. The interior life, intimate conversation with God I 40-47 48-51. 47,

The Theological Virtues, I, 52-56

2. Faith, II, 168-77.
3. Hope and its certitude, II, 178-86.
4. Charity, II, 187-212.

The Moral Virtues, I, 57-66

5. Prudence and the interior life, II, 77-89.
6. The different forms of justice, II, 90-98.
7. Fortitude and patience, II, 99-107.

8. Chastity, II, 108-16.
9. Humility, II, 117-39.
10. Actual grace and its different forms, I, 88-96.
11. The Blessed Trinity present in us, I, 97-108.
12. The gifts of the Holy Ghost and docility to the Holy Ghost, I, 66-88; II, 223-48.
13. The influence of Christ the Redeemer on His mystical body, I, 109-18.
14. The influence of Mary Mediatrix, I, 119-28.
15. The growth of the life of grace through merit, prayer, the sacraments, I, 129-43.
16. Sacramental confession, I, 397-405.
17. Assistance at Mass, source of sanctification, 1,406-13; II, 249-57.
18. Holy Communion, 1,414-27; II, 258-64.

THIRD RETREAT: ON CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

1. Christian perfection, its true nature, I, 144-62.
2. The grandeur of Christian perfection and the beatitudes, I, 163-73.
3. Christian perfection and the precept of love, I, 196-205.
4. Christian perfection and the evangelical counsels, I, 206-13.
5. The special obligation of the priest and the religious to tend to perfection, I, 214-24.
6. The three ages of the spiritual life, I, 225-46.
7. The spiritual age of beginners, I, 265-74.
8. The purification of the senses and the imagination, I, 332-52.
9. The purification of the intellect and the will, I, 353-78.
10. Retarded souls, I, 461-72.
11. The spiritual age of proficients, II, 65-71.
12. The discerning of spirits, II, 241-48.
13. The Sacrifice of the Mass and proficients, II, 249-57.
14. The Communion of proficients, II, 258-64.
15. The mysticism of *The Imitation* accessible to all, II, 272-78.
16. The crosses of the sensible part of the soul and those of the spirit, II, 40-64, 356-99.
17. The spiritual age of the perfect, II, 422-32.
18. The beatific vision and its normal prelude, II, 644-51.

Index

Abandonment to will of God, 195; hope transformed into, 413; its heroic degree manifested by heroic hope, 460 *ff.*
Abstinence, prolonged, 606
Affections, chastity and the inordinate, no
Age of beginners, meaning of term, 41 note 8; *see* Vol. I
Age of proficients *(see* Purification, passive, of the senses)
beginning of contemplation in, 47
beginning of mystical life in, 70
characteristics of, 65-71
Communion in, 258-64
conduct when one is unable to meditate, 56
continuation of purgative way, 3
correction of defects, 43
defects in, 41 ff., 358 ff.
definition of, 40
degrees of contemplative prayer in, 299-303
desire for God in, 47-50
devotion to Mary in, 265-71
entrance into, 21-29, 4°
experimental knowledge of God in, 61 ff., 65-71
fraternal charity in, 199
gifts of Holy Ghost and virtues in, symbolized by spiritual edifice, 72-76,
heroic acts of virtues in, 441
inability to meditate in, 45, 49
influence of gifts of Holy Ghost in, 47-50
knowledge of God in, 65-70
knowledge of self in, 61
lack of generosity in, 63
love of God in, 70
and the Mass, 249-57
moral virtues in, 75-79
progress in, 3 ff.
and the Rosary, 66
theological virtues in, 71-75
Age of the perfect *(see also* Purification, passive, of the spirit)
apostolic life in, 489-96
desire for God in, 399, 417
devotion to Mary in, 484 ff.
entrance into, 353
forms and degrees of unitive life, 489-510
heroic degree of the virtues in, 441-79; *see also* Virtues
indwelling of Trinity in, 426-32; *see also* Trinity
influence of Holy Ghost in perfect soul, 513-18
life of reparation in, 497-510
love of Jesus crucified in, 480-84, 486
love of God in, 425
peace in, 426, 533, 539 ff., 552-60, 57° ff.
knowledge of God in, 422-25
self-knowledge in, 424
Apostolate: conditions of, 494 ff.; eminent source of, 490-94; a form of the unitive life, 489-96; fruitfulness of, 494 ff.
Aridity: cause of sensible, 44 ff., 317; purpose of, 227; spiritual, 316
Ascetical, meaning of term, 548 note 2
Asceticism of *The Imitation,* 277
Autosuggestion: in hysteria, 609; and stigmatization, 602

Beatitudes
of the clean of heart, 380
highest acts of infused virtues, 443
of the merciful, 88, 230
of the peacemakers, 232
penetration of soul with beatitudes in passive purification, 397
of the poor, 226
relations to gifts of Holy Ghost, 226-
of those who hunger and thirst after justice, 229
of those who mourn, 228

Betrothal, spiritual, 552; W Espousals, spiritual
Blindness: physical, 613 ff.; spiritual, 169

Character: definition of, 91; education of, 95
Charisms; *see* Graces *gratis datae*
Charity; *see* Theological virtue of charity
Chastity
acquired, 109
infused, 109
loss of, 109
motive of, 109
preparation for contemplation, 11j
preservation of, no
spiritual fruitfulness of, tit-16
temptations against, 59 ff.
value of, 109
virginity, highest form of, 108
Childhood, spiritual; *see* Way of spiritual childhood
Communion: conditions of a fervent, 158; and the gift of oneself, 263; and the mystical body, 259-63; principal effect of, 258; *see also* Vol. I, chap. P
Confidence in God, voluntary poverty and, 143
Contemplation, acquired: conclusion in regard to, 311; confused with initial infused contemplation, 326 note 57; definition of, 309; Molinos on, 290
Contemplation, infused
and acquired prayer of recollection, 284
beginning of, 47, 55 ff., 310 ff.
call to, 319-23
character of newness in, 328 ff.
characteristics of, 318
chastity, preparation for, it5
condition of the apostolate, 494 ff.
conditions ordinarily required for, 326
definition of, 281, 287, 308, 310, 312, 34».
description of, 310, 314, 551, 564
desire for, 323
desire for revelations turns soul from, 583
differences in teaching of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross on, 342-49
direction of souls in relation to, 324 ff.
distinguished from meditation, 313
distractions and, 30
ecstasy and, 578
Contemplation, infused *(.continued)*
eminent source of the apostolate, 490-94
erroneous explanations of, 334
erroneous opinions on, 547
errors of quietism in regard to, 289-94
essence of, 567
explanation of direct acts of, 314
explanation of term "extraordinary," 276
explanation of transition to, 330-33
and fervent Communion, 304 ff.
flight of, the spiritual betrothal, 552
fruit of, in a mortified soul, 278
general and remote call to, 319 ff.
gifts of the Holy Ghost and, 280, 313, 333
hindered by self-sufficiency, 69
impression of darkness in, 381
individual and proximate call to, 322
inspiration of the Holy Ghost in, 281, 312 ff., 334
intimate nature of, 312-15
linked with gifts of Holy Ghost, 313
living faith, radical principle of, 314
means to obtain perfect love and perfect purity, 560-63
movements of, 423
necessary for sanctity, 568
need of the soul, 272
normal prelude of life of heaven, 321, 326
in normal way of sanctity, 275, 288,436
not extraordinary, 569
not an immediate perception of God, 3t8
not in our power, 313
painful presence of God in, 317
part of perfect union with God, 566 ff.
passage from meditation to, according to St. Francis de Sales, 279 ff.
passive recollection and beginning of, 285-88
of the perfect, 423 ff.
prayer of quiet, 300 ff.
prayer of simple union, 302
principal problem about, 307
and principles of teaching of St. Francis de Sales, 281
problem of new elements in, 327-35
proceeds from living faith, illumined by gift of wisdom, 424
progress of, 315
proximate principle of, 314
revelations (improperly so called) associated with, 585

Contemplation, infused *(continued")*
signs of proximate call to, 322
special illumination of gift of wisdom sufficient for, 337-41
superior to discourse, 317
in *The Imitation,* 273-77
what it does not require, 317 ff.
within reach of interior soul, 306
Contemplatives, reason for fewness of 288
Conversation of the perfect, 423,426,430
Conversion, acts disposing sinner to, 409 note 15
Conversion, second
Blessed Henry Suso on, 33
fact in lives of saints, 23 ff.
Father Lallemant on, 23-28
fruits of, 28, 37
necessity of, 21 ff.
references to, in liturgy, 22
St. Catherine of Siena on, 30-33
of St. Peter, 2t
Counsel, gift of; *see* Gifts of Holy Ghost
Counsels (evangelical), means of attaining perfection, 140
Cross: distinctive sign of Christian, 395; love of, 398; and mortification, 43; royal way of, 420; and zeal, 216

Dark night, explanation of, 376; *see* Purifications, passive
Darkness, gift of understanding and impression of, 381
Desire for God: in the perfect, 399, 417; in proficients, 47 ff.
Detachment: practice of, 147; spirit of, 141 ff.
Devotion, definition of substantial, 405
Devotion to Mary, 265-71; *see* Mary, Blessed Virgin
Discerning of spirits
definition of terms, 241
kinds of spirits, 242
dominant spirit in soul, 242
principle of the, 243
signs of the spirit: of nature, 243; of the devil, 245, of God, 246 ff.
Discontent in proficients, 43
Discouragement: opposed to hope, 178; in proficients, 43
Discretion, holy, 86 ff.
Docility to the Holy Ghost, characteristic of mystical life, 320
Duplicity, opposed to simplicity, 159
Dying, abandonment and the, 413

Ecstasy *(see also* Stigmatization)
definition of, 521, 524, 578, 611
described, 611
distinction between false and divine, 5
distinguished from rapture, 524
divine imaginary vision and, 587
duration of, 523
effects of, 522, 525
hysterical, 610
infused contemplation and, 578
and intensity of knowledge and love of God, 344
liberty and merit in, 523
not necessary to reach prayer of union, 303
in transforming union, 529
Effluvia: fragrant, 605; luminous, 605
Egoism, 360
Envy in proficients, 42
Espousals, spiritual: impulsion of soul toward God in, 554; normal, 552, 554; obtained only in mystical way, 554; state of perfect love, 552, 555 ff.
Evil: God's permission of, 484; and greater good, 211
Exorcism; *see* Phenomena, diabolical

Faith; *see* Theological virtue of faith
Favors, extraordinary *(see* Graces *gratis datae)*
differences: between morbid phenomena and, 609-16; in effects, 611 ff.; on part of phenomena, 610; on part of subject, 609
purpose of, 579
reasons for, 606
Fidelity, heroic life and, 460
Fire, spiritual, 375-78
Forgiveness of grave injury, results of, 3
Fortitude: described, 75; virtues attached to, 75; *see also* Gifts of Holy Ghost
Friendship, 188 ff.

Gift of understanding, 230
corresponds to beatitude of clean of heart, 380
and divine illumination, 389
and dogma of purgatory, 388
impression of darkness given by, 381-88
influence in passive purification of the spirit, 378-83
light of, 408 note 13

Gift of understanding *(continued)*
special inspiration of Holy Ghost received through, 280 ff., 312
speculative and practical, 314
supplies for imperfection of faith, 230
Gifts of Holy Ghost
ascending gradation of, 225-34
connected with charity, 224
connection of virtues and, 364
counsel, 229: and beatitude of the merciful, 88; and heroic prudence, 476; and holy discretion, 86-89; and imperfection of prudence, 230; and zeal, 218
difference between infused virtues and, 333 ff., 337
enumerated, 223
fear, 226
fortitude, 228: and virtue of fortitude, 474
influence in proficients, 47
infused contemplation linked with, 3>3
knowledge, 227
lack of indication of, 233
mode of, 338
nature of, 223; *see also* Vol. I, chap. 3. a. 4
piety, 227: and meekness, 104
role of, 638
their superhuman mode characteristic of contemplation, 318
understanding; *see* Gift of understanding
variety in, 357
wisdom, 231 ff.: and contemplation, 280; quasi-experimental knowledge of God, 317, 428; special inspiration of Holy Ghost, 281, 312; speculative and practical, 314
Glory of God, zeal for, 216, 218
Grace
confirmation in, 533 ff.
degree recovered after serious sin, 32
increase following repentance, 625
life of, seed of glory, 644
sanctifying: definition of, 19; superior to graces *gratis datae,* 511, 575, 648
Graces *gratis datae*
enumerated by St. Paul, 575
nature and division of, 575
in the saints, 577
superiority of sanctifying grace and charity to, 575, 648
teaching of St. John of the Cross on, 577
Holy Ghost
activity of, in souls, 513-17
docility to: acts that prepare the soul for, 234; conditions required for, 233, 241; fruits of, 237-40; harmony with obedience and prudence, 236
Father Lithard on special illumination of. 335
gifts of; *see* Gifts of Holy Ghost
inspiration, 224, 282, 327 note: definition of, 330; dispositions to receive, 310; principle of infused contemplation, 312 ff.; sufficient for infused contemplation, 334, 337-41
source of light and love, 431
Hope; *see* Theological virtue of hope
Humility
connected with theological virtues, 118
of Christ, 127-31, 136-39
Christian dignity and union of, 131-36
degrees of, 126, 405
foundation of spiritual life, 117
four consequences springing from supernatural basis of, 119-22
and the glory of the cross, 136-39
heroic degree of, 472
magnanimity and, 132-36
nature of, 118
obedience, sign of, 129
pride and, 129
purification of, in night of the spirit, 403
removes pride, 117
result of purification of, 404
spirit of God and true, 246
toward God, 118-22
toward one's neighbor, 122 ff.: and attitude toward praise or reproach, 125; distinguished from human respect, 124
twofold dogmatic basis of, 118
Hysteria, 608-11
and blindness, 613
characterized, 609
delirium of illusion in, 610
effects of, 611
nature of, 614
signs of typical, 613
true, incompatible with eminent moral life, 616

Illumination, special; *see* Holy Ghost
Imitation, The: asceticism of, 277; contemplation in, 273-77

Imprudence, 80
Indwelling of the Blessed Trinity; *see* Trinity
Inspiration; *see* Holy Ghost

Jealousy: and fraternal charity, 211; in proficients, 42
Judgment: deliverance from personal, 152; its maturity in way of spiritual childhood, 437; rash doubt and rash, 208 note 20
Justice *(see also* Virtues, cardinal)
and charity, 96
and duties of liberality, 97
and filial piety, 96
forms of: commutative, 91; distributive, 91, 93; equity, 91, 94; legal or social, 91, 93
grandeur of, 98
and peace, 96
and rights and duties of friendship, 97
and virtue of religion, 96

Knowledge *(see also* Gifts of Holy Ghost)
definition of mystical knowledge of God, 273
experimental knowledge of God and self, 61 ff., 66-70
modes of particular and distinct supernatural, 378
quasi-experimental knowledge of divine presence, 428
superhuman mode of knowledge, characteristic of mystical life, 320

Language of mystics, theologians, and spiritual writers, 6-16: necessity of scholastic terminology, 20
Levitation, 604
Liberty: of children of God, 431; and obedience, 156
Life *(see* Way of spiritual childhood)
axis of the spiritual, 628 ff.: and ascetical theology, 637; and true mystical theology, 638-43
end of interior, 321
inspiration of ascetical, 637
mystical: basic principle of, 319; beginning of, 70; characteristics of, 318 ff.; in normal way of sanctity, 321; and pathological disturbances, 613
Life *(continued)*
spiritual childhood, a form of perfect, 433-39
supernatural: wrong definition of, 642 note 30
Light, purifying infused, 375-78
Locutions, purpose of spiritual, 679 note 25; *see* Words, supernatural
Love
act of infused love, free and meritorious, 310
desire for equality of, 569
filial, 31
of God: and chastity, 113; and our natural dispositions, 192; and spiritual maternity and paternity, 114
imperfect or mercenary, 30: signs of, 87
infused: characteristic of mystical life, 320
nature of love and marks of its progress, 188-92
of neighbor: extension of love of God, 213; and zeal, 213-18
perfect: end of life, 552; erroneous opinions on, 547; mystical contemplation means to obtain, 560-63; obtained in spiritual espousals and spiritual marriage, 552
perfection of: described in *A Spiritual Canticle,* 547-68
pure: practice of, 294 ff.; problem, 297
Lying, results of habit of, 162

Magnanimity: definition of, 122 note 15; its place among virtues, 179; strengthened by humility, 124; union of humility and, 132-36
Marriage, spiritual
description of, 114
gifts of Holy Ghost in, 554
mystical, 562, 566
normal, 562, 566
perfect calm of powers and senses in, 559
perfect purity and equality of love in, 560
perfection: of love in, 557-66; of virtues in, 565
purity of original justice in, 562
solitude of soul with Bridegroom in, 559
state of perfect love, 552 ff., 564 ff.
total death of passions in, 558
Martyrdom, obedience and, 156

Martyrs: heroic degree of virtue in, 444; true and false, 448
Mary (Blessed Virgin): act of consecration to, 270; model of reparatory souls, 497
Mary, devotion to, 265: degrees of, 266 ff.; fruits of, 268 ff.
Mass *(see also* Vol. I, chap. 31)
  and the dying, 250, 254 ft.
  ends of, 250: adoration, 251; petition, 254; reparation, 252 ff.; thanksgiving, 255
  oblation in union with the, 255 ff.
  progress in the interior life and, 249 ff.
  source of excellence of, 249
Maternity, spiritual: source in love of God, 114
Meditation
  conduct when unable to make, 56
  description of, 279
  distinction between contemplation and, 280
  inability of proficients to make, 45, 49
  in our power, 313
  return to discursive, 58
Meekness
  fruits of, 102-7
  gift of piety and, 104
  heroic degree of, 472
  preparation for contemplation, 107 note 26
  in Scripture, 105
  zeal and, 219
Mystical, meaning of term, 548 note 2
Mysticism of *The Imitation,* 272-78
Mystics: effects of extraordinary favors on, 611 ff.; growth through contemplation, 609; inverse of hysterical subjects, 610

Naturalism, practical, 275-80, 393
Nature: different meanings of word, 7; spirit of, 243
Neurasthenia, symptoms of, 52
Neuroses, 616 note 14
Night of the senses; *see* Purification (passive) of senses
Night of the spirit; *see* Purification (passive) of spirit
Nothingness of the creature, 11, 13, 17

Obedience
  and events as signs of the divine will, 453
  formal motive of, 151 note 4
  fruits of, 154-57
  gift of counsel and, 155
  glorified by Christ, 129
  grandeur of, 149-57
  harmonizing of docility to Holy Ghost with, 236
  heroic: from heroic faith, 452
  highest of counsels, 149
  sign of humility, 129
  soul delivered from slavery by, 453-54
  spirit of counsel of: necessary for perfection, 153
  zeal, and, 218
Observances (monastic), reason for, 489
Obsession; *see* Phenomena, diabolical

Paternity (spiritual), source in love of God, 114
Patience: aid to practice of, 101; defined and described, 99; as a solid virtue, 100; temptations against, 59 ff.; zeal and, 219
Peace: and justice, 96; in the perfect, 426, 533, 539 ff., 557-60, 570 ff.; and the spirit of God, 247
Perfection: chiefly in charity, 140; disposition of religious with regard to, 26; *see also* Vol. I, chap. 13
Phenomena, diabolical
  classified, 617
  excesses to be avoided in attribution of, 617
  obsession: defined, 618; diabolical siege, 619; efficacy of exorcisms against, 623; manner of dealing with, 619; results of, 618
  permission of God and, 617, 626
  possession: defined, 620; exorcism and, 623; a punishment, 621; a purifying trial, 621; remedies for, 622; signs of, 621; a striking example of, 623; teaching of St. John of the Cross on, 624; two states in, 620
Phenomena, morbid, 608-16
Piety; *see* Gifts of Holy Ghost
Possession; *see* Phenomena, diabolical
Poverty
  confidence in God and, 143
  fruitfulness of, 145 ff.
  merit of vow of, 147
  reasons for Christ's, 145
  spirit of, 140
  value of, 241-45

Prayer: of arid quiet, 316; qualities of, 323; of quiet, 300ff.; of simple union, 302; simplified affective, 633; various forms of simplified, 634-37; *see also* Contemplation
Predestination: certitude of, 516, 534; signs of, 395; temptations in regard to, 413 note 26
Presence of God: painful, 317; quasi-experimental knowledge of, 428
Presumption, 178
Pride: contrary to humility, 129; removed by passive purification of the spirit, 399; serious sin, 149; spiritual, 41, 358, *361*
Proficients; *see* Age of proficients
Prudence, 76
  acquired: infused prudence and, 78; self-control and, 81-84
  defects to be avoided, 79 ff.
  docility to Holy Ghost and, 236
  false, 80
  gift of counsel and, 86-89
  holy discretion and, 86 ff.
  infused, 86
  negative, 84
  zeal and, 218
Psychoneuroses and psychoses, 616 note M
Purgatory: anticipated, 320, 382; compared with passive purifications, 319 note 22
Purgatory, dogma of: and beatific vision, 649; and gift of understanding, 388; and transforming union, 539
Purification: of charity, 414-18; of faith, 406-10; of hope, 410-14; of humility, 403 ff.; of piety, 405
Purification (passive) of the senses
  beginning of contemplation in, 47, 314
  cause of, 47-51
  cause of aridity in, 44®.
  conduct in, 54-64
  described according to Tauler, 35
  desire for God, 47-50
  effects of, 61-64
  entrance into illuminative way, 40
  necessity of, 40-43
  neurasthenia distinguished from, 52
  in normal way of sanctity, 35, 55, 63, 649
  and progress in intensity of knowledge and love of God, 316
  result of fidelity during, 57, 61-64
  rules of direction for, 54-59
Purification of the senses *(continued)*
  signs of, 43-45, 51
  temptations against chastity and patience in, 59 ff.
  trials ordinarily accompanying, 59
  way produced, 43
Purification (passive) of the spirit
  anticipated purgatory, 382
  cause of, 375-83
  conduct during, 392-99
  conclusion in regard to, 508
  darkness and desolation during, 367 ff.
  decisive struggle, 363
  description of, 367-74
  distinguished from neurasthenia, 367 note i
  entrance into unitive way, 353
  faith in mystery of the cross in, 394
  firm hope and constant prayer in, 395 ff.
  generous acceptance and abandonment in, 392
  heroic acts and degree of virtues in, 44'
  influence of gift of understanding in, 378-83
  love of conformity and submission to God's good pleasure in, 397 ff.
  mystical death, 363, 391
  nature of, 375
  necessity of, 356 ff.
  progress in intensity of knowledge and love of God in, 316
  positive effects, 403-18
  references on description and explanation of, 383 note 34
  pride and self-love removed by, 399
  and reparation, 509
  sadness in, 368
  sufferings like those of purgatory, 414
  sufferings occasionally accompanying, 418-21
  temptations on mystery of predestination, 385
Purifications, passive
  advantage of considering, 358
  anticipated purgatory, 320, 382
  belong to mystical order, 320
  collective, 401
  necessary for perfection, 320, 356
  in normal way of sanctity, 320
Purity: of heart, 28; mystical contemplation as means to obtain perfect, 560-63
Pusillanimity: origin of, 122; description of, 122, 124; in proficients, 43

Quiet, prayer of; *see* Contemplation
Quietism: and abandonment, 393; Catholic doctrine and errors of Molinos juxtaposed, 291; and contemplation, 312 note 19; of Molinos, 289-92; teaching on humanity of Christ, 480

Rapture, definition of, 525, 578
Religion, virtue of: its purification in night of the spirit, 405
Reparation, life of, 497: in all who carry a heavy cross, 500 ff.; conclusion in regard to, 509; in the priest, 498 ff.; in St. Paul of the Cross, 502-8
Repentance and notable increase of grace, 625
Respect, human: definition of, 124; opposed to justice, 93
Retreats, three: summary of this work in, 656
Revelations
  conduct in regard to, 580 ff.
  desire for, 582 ff.
  divine: definition of, 580
  possibility of error in, 581
  private, 580, 584
  prophetic, 577
  public, 580
  signs of divine origin of, 582
Rosary, proficients and the, 66

Sacrifice of the Mass; *see* Mass
Sanctity: definition of, 55, 568, 650; mystical life in normal way of, 321; and pathological disturbances, 61$
Self-control, 81
Self-seeking, natural eagerness in, 42
Self-sufficiency and contemplation, 69
Self-will: definition of, 151; deliverance from, 151 ff.
Semi-quietism, 292 ff.: and abandonment, 383
Sensuality or spiritual gluttony, 41
Siege, diabolical; *see* Phenomena, diabolical
Simplicity, 158
  of a child, 433 ff.
  of Christ, 164
  defects opposed to, 159
  definition of, 159
  of God, 162
  heroic degree of, 475
  preparation for contemplation, 162
  of the saints, 165 ff.
Simplicity *(continued)*
  of spirit of faith, 169
  veracity and, 162-67
  teaching of St. Francis de Sales on, 163
  in *The Imitation,* 167 note 31
Sloth, spiritual, 41
Spirit: definition of, 242; kinds of, 242
Spirit, signs of the: of the devil, 245; of God, 246; of nature, 243
Spouse of Christ: condition of, 114; meanings of term, 542 ff.; title merited, 113
State, mystical: definition of, 595; progressive extension of, 315
Stigmatization, 596-604: and feast of stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi, 607
Sufficiency, 42
Suggestion: in hysteria, 609; stigmatization and hypnotic, 596
Sulkiness in proficients, 43
Symbolism: of tree of evil, 364; of tree of virtues and of gifts, 364, 366
Synthesis of treatise, 655

Talents, preference for human: in religious life, 27
Temperance, acquired and infused, 78
Temptation: fear of consent to, 387; and its causes, 627; and necessity of energetic acts of virtue, 60; revelation of our misery and need of grace, 60
Theological virtue of charity, toward God: heroic degree of, 465-71; *see also* Love
Theological virtue of charity, toward neighbor
  compass and order of, 203-6
  efficacy of, 202
  how to make progress, 206-12
  and jealousy, 211
  and justice, 96
  motive of, 200 ff.
  purification of, 414-18
  radiation of love of God, 199
  and rash judgment, 208 ff.
  sign of progress in proficients, 199
  and the spirit of God, 247
Theological virtue of faith
  aided by gift of understanding, 170
  confirmed by gift of understanding, 380
  definition of, 406
  excellence and power of, 172 ff.

Theological virtue of faith *(continued)*
growth of, 171
heroic degree of, 450-55
nature of spirit of, 168-71
night of, 393
a practical manner of living by, 175 ff.
purification of, 406-10
source of heroic obedience, 452
victory of, 455
and zeal, 218
Theological virtue of hope
certitude of, 180, 413 note 26: in transforming union, 535
defects opposed to, 178
definition of, 410
and desire for God, 296
effects of, 184 ff.
heroic degree of, 457
in night of spirit, 395 ff.
prayers expressing, 186
purification of, 410-14
qualities of, 181-84
true nature of, 179
Theology: ascetical and mystical, 628-33; spiritual, 652 ff.
Touch, divine, 551, 592-95
Trinity: indwelling of, 426-32, 517; intellectual vision of, 528

Union
letter on life of, 570 ff.
mystical: arid and painful, 519 ff.; definition of, 517, 550; ecstatic union, 521; painful purification of love, 526
ordinary conditions of, 325
Union, transforming, 527
in *A Spiritual Canticle,* 547-68
all souls called to, 568 ff.
characteristics of souls in, 538
consummate perfection attained only in, 55°
description by a contemplative, 570 ff.
desire of, 544
detachment from self and love of God in souls approaching, 541
divine touches in, 594
ecstasy in, 529
effects of, 533-39
essential nature of, 529 ff.
graces sometimes accompanying, yjg
intimacy of, 546
normal, according to St. John of the Cross, 549
not extraordinary, 547
Union, transforming *(continued)*
prayer of Holy Ghost in, according to Tauler, 540
prelude of heaven, 547
and purgatory, 539
supreme development of life of grace, 527· 53<$. 539
Tauler's description of, 539 ff.
theological explanation of, 531 ff.
title of "spouse" and, 542 ff.
Union with Mary, call to, 570
Uprightness; *see* Simplicity

Veracity, 160 ff.: simplicity of saints, an aspect of, 162-67; *see also* Simplicity
Virginity, 108
Virtues
acquired moral: distinction between infused virtues and, 77; in man in mortal sin, 83
cardinal: eminent degree of, 97; gifts corresponding to, 76; meaning of term, 75, 77; virtues annexed to each of the, 75
connection of gifts and, 364
difficulty in practicing seemingly contradictory, 446
heroic degree of: beginning of, 441; in children, 448; connection of the virtues and, 445-48; distinctive marks of, 442-45; of moral virtues, 473-79; obedience, 452; in spiritual espousals, 553
moral, heroic degree of: fortitude and magnaminity, 473 ff.; humility and meekness, 472; justice, 477 ff.; prudence, 475 ff.; religious virtues, 479
theological: full development of, in transforming union, 533; *see* Theological virtues
Virtues of religion, 147
Vision, beatific: ardent desire for, 648; normal prelude of, 644, 648-51; St. Thomas' teaching on, 644-48
Visions: definition of kinds of, 577; supernatural, 586 ff.
Vows: inspiration of, 148; merit of, 147

Way: distinction between ascetical and mystical, 560; illuminative *(see* Age of proficients) ; unitive *(see* Age of the perfect)

Way of spiritual childhood
distinction between spiritual and natural childhood, 437
doctrine of grace in, 438
harmonizing of humility with desire for contemplation in, 436
harmonizing of seemingly contradictory virtues in, 436
innate qualities of a child, 433 ff.
principal virtues of the child of God, 435 ff.
Weight, bodies having extraordinary, 604
Will: Christian education of, 91, q$. need of purifying depths of,'360-64
Will, signified divine: and hope, 413; progressive conformity to, 193-98
Words, supernatural
auricular, 589
formal intellectual, 591
imaginary, 589
intellectual, 590
substantial intellectual, 591
successive, 390
Wound: of love, 536; spiritual wound of the heart, 500

Zeal: and the apostolate, 221; and ardent love of God, 213; definition of, Ï14; in normal way of sanctity, 221; qualities of, 218-21

Some Terms Used in This Book

(Added by the Publisher to the 1989 printing.)

Sensible, Sensitive—of the senses. These terms are used in reference either to the senses proper (external or internal, including the imagination) or to those movements of the appetites known as passions or emotions.

JUSTICE—1. the state of (Sanctifying) Grace. 2. the moral virtue by which one gives what is due to God, oneself and one's neighbor. (It is in the first sense that the term is usually used in the theology of the spiritual life.)

Justification, Sanctification—entering the state of grace. Sanctification also refers to the *increase of* Sanctifying Grace in the soul.

Supernatural—divine; pertaining to God or to Sanctifying Grace, which is divine life in the soul. Sanctifying Grace is described as "living water" in the Scriptures. By Sanctifying Grace the three Divine Persons dwell in the soul. The following accompany Sanctifying Grace and are likewise supernatural: the three Theological Virtues—Faith, Hope and Charity; the four infused moral virtues: prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude (these four virtues can also exist on the *natural* level); the seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost. All these supernatural gifts except Faith and Hope are lost by mortal sin; they are all regained through sacramental absolution.

THE JUST—a person in the state of Sanctifying Grace.

The SINNER—a person in the state of mortal sin.

CHARITY—1) the supernatural virtue by which one loves God for His own sake and one's neighbor as oneself for the love of God; this virtue is infused into the soul in Baptism and also in absolution after sacramental confession of mortal sin. Charity is the highest virtue; it vivifies, "informs," or "forms the soul of" every other supernatural virtue. 2) acts of love of God or neighbor as defined above. A person in the state of mortal sin cannot exercise the virtue of Charity because he has lost Charity along with Sanctifying Grace. He can only perform acts of natural love of God and neighbor; these are not meritorious for salvation and heavenly reward, though God in His mercy may look upon them as a plea for the gifts of true repentance and return to Sanctifying Grace.

FAITH—the supernatural virtue by which one believes, on the word of God, all the truths He has revealed. This virtue is infused into the soul along with Sanctifying Grace. A person in the state of grace has *living* faith, because his faith is "informed" by Charity; a person in the state of mortal sin may still have faith, but it will be only *dead* faith.

Hope—the supernatural virtue by which one trusts in God's promises to give him eternal life and the means to obtain it. This virtue is infused into the soul along with Sanctifying Grace.

SANCTITY—the possessing of a high degree of Sanctifying Grace, and living by the supernatural virtues, especially Faith, Hope and, above all, Charity.

MYSTICAL—pertaining to the higher levels of sanctity, in which the soul's supernatural acts are carried out in a divine mode, in intimate dependence upon the seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost. Christians who have not attained to this degree of sanctity perform their supernatural actions in a more human mode; in them the seven Gifts are relatively dormant. Mystical prayer is called contemplation. Phenomena such as visions and revelations, though often found in mystics, are not of the essence of the mystical life.

CONTEMPLATION—the higher of the two forms of mental prayer (the lower being meditation). Contemplation is an infused loving knowledge of God. In contemplation, reasoning and discourse are left behind and the mind and will are fixed on God in a wordless act of love, resulting in close union with Him. Contemplation is also called mystical or infused prayer. It is a special gift of God and cannot be acquired by one's own efforts, even aided by actual grace. Nevertheless, one can and should prepare for this gift by humble and persevering efforts at meditation and by the practice of the virtues.

Meditation—the lower of the two forms of mental prayer. In meditation one employs his intellect and will in reflections, affections and holy resolutions.

Gifts of the Holy Ghost, The Seven—Wisdom, Understanding, Knowledge, Counsel, Piety, Fortitude, Fear (of the Lord). These Gifts are infused dispositions which make a man promptly docile to divine inspirations. They have traditionally been compared to the sails of a ship, enabling the ship to be moved by the wind—which represents the inspirations of the Holy Ghost.

Charisms, or Graces *Gratis Datae* ("Freely Given")—extraordinary spiritual gifts of God such as the gifts of miracles, prophecy and tongues. These are gifts given chiefly for the good of souls other than the recipient; graces *gratis datae* are greatly inferior to Sanctifying Grace and the virtue of Charity. The seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost are not graces *gratis datae;* rather, they are in the normal way of sanctity.

Actual Grace—a supernatural help of God which enlightens the mind and strengthens the will to do good and to avoid evil. Actual grace is a transient gift; it does not remain in the soul.

FR. GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE, O.P.

Fr. Reginald Marie Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. (1877-1964) was one of the great Catholic theologians of the 20th century and during his life was undoubtedly the greatest living Dominican theologian. (He is not to be confused with his uncle, Père Lagrange, the biblical scholar.) Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange initially attracted attention in the early 20th century, when he wrote against Modernism. Recognizing that Modernism—which denied the objective truth of divine revelation and affirmed an heretical conception of the evolution of dogma—struck at the very root of Catholic faith, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange wrote classic works on apologetics, defending the Catholic Faith by way of both philosophy and theology. He also taught at the Angelicum in Rome from 1909 to 1960, and he served for many years as a consultor to the Holy Office and other Roman Congregations. He is most famous, however, for his writings.

A thoroughgoing Thomist in the classic Dominican tradition, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange had both a deep appreciation for the enduring vitality of St. Thomas Aquinas' work and a real understanding of the intellectual and spiritual needs of his own time. Having steeped himself in Thomistic principles, he thought through virtually every aspect of the Faith in the light of these principles, producing over 500 books and articles, which give a true theological view of the doctrines of the Faith, bringing out their central elements, placing each element in its proper perspective and relating all the elements to each other. He thus sheds a beautiful, clear light on the truths of the Faith and gives a very firm foundation for understanding them truly. The Catholic Faith thereby stands out in all its splendor—a divine work of incomparable beauty, integrity and structure, ordered to raise man to the divine life of grace and bring to flower in him the "supernatural organism" of Sanctifying Grace and the Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost—the wellsprings of all true mysticism.

Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange was best known for his spiritual theology, particularly for insisting on the universal call to holiness and for zealously propounding the thesis that infused contemplation—and the resulting union with God—are in the *normal* way ol holiness or Christian perfection. Thus, Fr. (iiutlgou l .(grange raises the sights of the soul to tli<· nue greatness planned for it by God. His classic woik In this field and lus overall masterpiece -is I lt· *l luce* Ages *of the* Interior |j/e Among his other ⁋anutii theological works arc Ihe Hirer Wtys ‹›/ the 's/iiiiiiitit/ *l i/*‹, ‹ .'hristhui Iri/otimi and i ntiicm/›l‹i(i‹>n

(Continued from outside back cover.)

transforming union, the role of spiritual childhood and of True Devotion to Mary, the charisms (visions, ecstasies, stigmatization, etc.), private revelations, true mystical phenomena vs. false or diabolical phenomena, and a host of other topics.

Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange explains precisely in what sanctity consists and clearly expounds and defends the ancient Christian tradition that *all Christians are called to holiness.* The title of this work refers to the classic division of the spiritual life into three successive stages: the Purgative Way, the Illuminative Way, and the Unitive Way. Showing that the faithful Christian's life of ascetical practices is meant to flower into the mystical life, he clearly distinguishes between, on the one hand, those graces of the mystical life that are in themselves extraordinary (such as visions and ecstasies), and on the other hand, that grace which is often *considered* extraordinary (because not common among souls) but which is in fact in the normal way of sanctity, namely, infused contemplation. In particular, he propounds the thesis that infused contemplation of the mysteries of Faith—and the resulting union with God—are in *the normal way of sanctity and are also morally necessary for holiness.* Infused contemplation is thus clearly presented, not as a peripheral phenomenon in the spiritual life, nor as something reserved for those in the cloister, but rather as a gift which any Christian may well desire and beseech of God, since it is the usual way of reaching eminent sanctity.

The Three *Ages of the Interior Life* is a great classic which explains in effect the entire Catholic tradition on the spiritual life. It is a work for all who really want to know what the interior life is actually about, and for all who want to gain a true understanding of the great holiness to which Almighty God is at all times calling souls.

Bibliotheca
fratemtos *Sacerdotalis Sancti Tetri*

(Continued from inside front flap.)

The Love of God *and the Cross of Jesus, The Mother of the Saviour and our Interior Life,* and Christ *the Savior.* His most important philosophical work was God, His Existence and Nature: A *Thomistic Solution of Certain Agnostic Antinomies.*

The theological works of Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange are unlikely to be equalled for many decades to come, and they cannot be ignored by anyone who wants to attain a true understanding of the Catholic Faith, for it is only by understanding her doctrines that one will truly undentund the Catholic Church and the

J

18045

'Bibliotheca
fraternitas Sacerdotalis Sancti Tetri

DATE DUE

OAVIOMO

'NINttOIN MBA

THE *Three Ages of the Interior Life* is one of the greatest works ever written on the spiritual life, and it is the masterpiece of Father Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. (1877-1964), whom many consider the greatest theologian of the 20th century. First published in English in 1948, *The Three Ages of the Interior Life* has been out *of* print for many years, yet it is widely known and highly esteemed by those fortunate enough to own a set.

In this classic work Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange has given a complete and systematic explanation of ascetical and mystical theology, in the process explaining all aspects of the supernatural life of grace in the soul and showing how Sanctifying Grace, along with the Supernatural Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, and the Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost, are meant to grow and develop as a "supernatural organism" in every Christian soul. Basing his teaching squarely on the principles of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. John of the Cross, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange also draws freely from Sacred Scripture and Tradition, as well as from the teachings of the great Saints, Doctors of the Church and other Catholic mystical writers.

Composed of 95 chapters, this two-volume work covers a myriad of topics, yet it is no mere random collection of doctrinal subjects. Rather, it is a work of unity, structure and purpose, and it is extremely valuable as a roadmap for understanding the rich but often disorganized writings of the Saints and other mystical writers.

Among the topics explained by Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange are the healing of pride and of acedia (spiritual sloth), spiritual direction, the.discovering and combating of one's predominant fault, the active and passive purifications of the senses, intellect and will, the way to draw fruit from Confession and Holy Communion, retarded souls, preparation for infused contemplation, understanding rhe language of mystical writers, the spiritual fruits of chastity, the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, the discerning of spirits, the degrees of contemplative prayer, the heroic degree of the various Christian virtues, the errors of Modernism, naturalism, Americanism, Jansenism and Quietism and how they deform the spiritual life, the entrances into the illuminative and unitivc ways, the dark nights of the senses and of the spirit and the conduct to be observed therein, love for the Divine Will, zeal for the salvation of souls, the mystical espousals and the mystical marriage,

(Continued on inside hick *flal>.)*

•*Bibliotheca*
Sacerdotalis Sancti fetn